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THE
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THE LOVE STORY.

MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

AUTHOR OF

"KATHLEEN," "THEO," "MISS CRESPIGNY," "LINDSAY'S LUCK,"
"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON," "JARL'S DAUGHTER."

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A QUIET LIFE.

A PATHETIC LOVE STORY.

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CHAPTER I.

A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

THE rector of Coombe-Ashley raised his eyes from the manuscript over which he had been poring all the morning, and turned his face to the door with a half-wearied air of listening attention. There was a sound as of light feet in the hall below, and he was listening to hear if they would pass the parlor, and come up the stair-case. Yes, they were coming, for the next

instant they were springing up the old oaken stairs with a gay, soft patter, and in a minute more they stopped at the half-open door.

"May I come in, papa?" said a fresh, girlish voice. "Or are you too busy? I have something to tell you."

His rugged face softened wonderfully at the musical sound, which was the sweetest in all the world to him; but his quiet nature would not let his tone express more than simple words.

"Come in, Prue," he said, and then she entered.

Such a bright young face as she brought to lighten the dim old room, with its piles of dingy papers, and shelves of dingy books; such a fresh, sweet, bonny young face! Once or twice in a lifetime, perhaps, one meets with such a face as this little plainly-dressed Prue. The big, brown eyes, had the innocent, untried look of a child's, the round, white chin, with the soft dimple in it, might have been a baby's; the sweet, serious mouth was as tenderly innocent as the veriest

child's on earth. After all, of course, she was scarcely a woman yet, being little more than seventeen; but still there are few girls who preserve that simple tenderness of expression even through seventeen years. It is quite possible that her quaintly quiet life had made the rector's daughter less of a woman than she would otherwise have been. Making pies and broth for sick pensioners, and turning half-worn dresses, had been the greatest of her responsibilities; visiting the poor of the parish, and occasionally calling in timid state upon her father's patroness, Lady Strathspey, the greatest of her dissipations.

Accordingly, at seventeen, pretty Prue Renfrew was as fresh and ignorant of worldliness as a child of seven, and as ready to be pleased, and as anxious to please, as few children of seven are in this age of civilization.

There was a little touch of excited pleasure on her face as she came into the room, and it made her look very pretty indeed as she pulled off her

well-worn little gloves, and unbuttoned her little rough coat.

"Guess who I have seen?" she said at last, coming behind her father to lean over his arm-chair. "Just guess, papa."

"Who?" he asked, looking up at her with a touch of a smile on his reticent Scottish mouth. He was a Scotchman, the Rev. David Renfrew, and, like most Scotchmen, grave almost to taciturnity; but this one ewe lamb of his lonely, hard-working life, was the light of his eyes. "Who was it, Prue?" he asked.

She shook her brown head with a little laugh.

"Guess," she said. "Somebody very important, to us at least; somebody very handsome."

"Old Donald Ross," with a dry humor in his voice.

"Now, papa! Somebody very grand. Surely you can guess now."

He shook his head.

She broke into a sweet little laugh of triumph.

"I knew you couldn't. Well, I have seen—my lord."

He started a thought nervously. In his quiet, restrained way he had a nervous, awkward dread of this long-absent patron of his.

"Not Lord Strathspey?"

"Yes, Lord Strathspey. He is very grand and handsome, papa"—stroking his grizzled hair with a timid little sigh. "The grandest person I ever saw, I think."

"Where did you see him?" he asked.

"On the Brae. I had just come out of Donald's cottage, when he passed by. He stopped a moment to look at me, I think, for he was looking when I saw him first, and he bowed to me. I wish I had had my best dress on," naïvely. "This one is so shabby, you see."

Her father glanced down at the garment in question, and echoed the faint sigh with which she had ended her words.

It was rather shabby, if the truth was to be

told. Shabby dresses were no novelty to this pretty young creature, with her innocent vanity. Even the sober browns and grays which usually made up her limited wardrobe, were always turned and furbished until their fictitious newness became more than questionable, and her quiet little brown walking-dress was as well worn as it was precise in its neatness.

It had been a long-cherished hope of this business-like little Prue, that Lord Strathspey's return would make matters better ; and just now her small, brown head was full of it.

"I wonder if he will come here to see you, papa," she said at last. "He ought to, you know."

She had taken a seat then, and having produced a before invisible work-basket, was stitching demurely on a new wristband.

"I think he ought to, you know," she went on sagely, "I don't think he would be doing his duty if he did not show some interest in the parish after

neglecting it so long. Why, he has not been here since — dear me! since I was quite young. For ten years, I should think. Has he, papa?”

“No,” with a faint smile. “He was sixteen when he left Scotland, and you were seven. I doubt if you have ever seen him before, Prue.”

“Yes, I have,” nodding her brown head. “I saw him in church once. That was how I knew him to-day. I remembered his face. I think I remembered it because it is so beautiful. It is beautiful — ever so beautiful,” and a soft little blush rose to her cheeks.

To tell the truth, Lord Strathspey was something of a hero to his rector’s daughter. She had remembered the handsome, boyish face she had seen in the grand velvet-hassocked pew as something to be admired with a tender sort of reverential awe. She had always been afraid of Lady Strathspey, and her stately ways: but her distant, secret admiration of her young hero had something half affectionate in it, in spite of what ap-

peared, to her simplicity, his grandeur. As she had grown older, her remembrance of him had grown fainter; but it had been a remembrance still, and had helped her to recognize him when they met, even though he had become a matured man, in the prime of life—and the boyish face was lost forever. Then, again, she had heard so much about it. The few of his tenantry, who had seen him in their short visits to London, had brought back wondrous accounts of his grace, and learning, and debonair ways. “My son,” in Lady Strathspey’s eyes, was almost a demigod—a noble young demigod, to be bowed down to, and worshiped, at a respectful distance, by his inferiors. The tenants who had not seen him, had certainly heard of him enough, for “my son’s wishes,” and “his lordship’s plans,” ruled Coombe-Ashley as completely as any despot’s iron hand, though, of course, in a milder degree. It had been a great trial to her stately ladyship, the people said, that Strathspey had cared so little for

Coombe-Ashley, and had been so long a stranger to it, and a sojourner in foreign lands; and it was a great happiness to her, every one knew, that he had at last acceded to her wishes, and decided to spend at least the winter, on his long-neglected estate.

Just now innocent brown-eyed Prue was wondering if she should, at last, have a nearer view of this hero. Her thoughts were a curious mixture of romance and practicability. Perhaps he would come to the rectory, and then, of course, she would be obliged to meet him; for, long before bread and butter and short dresses were things of the past, she had been her father's helpmeet, and the childish mistress of the little brown gabled house. Then, of course, if he was as generous as people said he was, he would see how wretchedly paid for his hard labor his rector had been, and then—Well, perhaps, it would be easier to buy the quiet little dresses and hats, and possibly a time might come when her own gloves and

papa's would not have to be mended so often. Having got to this turn of thought, she looked up at her father quietly. He had turned to the manuscript again, and was working as hard as ever. How grave his face was, and how gray he was getting, and how many weary hours he was obliged to spend over those dreadful books—for the poor pittance had to be worked out in more ways than one.

"Papa," she said, softly, "don't you suppose —" and then hesitated a little.

He raised his head, as he always did, at the sound of her voice.

"What is it, my bairn?" he asked. "My bairn" was the quiet pet name he had given her from the first mournful hour when he had received her from her young mother's dying arms; and there was something almost touching in the quaint sound, as it came from his grave lips.

"Don't you suppose that Lord Strathspey's coming home will make a difference?"

"In what?"

“In — well — make a difference to you. Perhaps he will give you some more money,” she said wisely. “He ought to.”

“Perhaps he will,” returned the rector half grave, half smiling. “What do you want, Prue?”

She laid her work down, and came behind his chair, clasping her arms round his neck, and laying her soft cheek on his grizzled head, with an odd little caressing nestle, like a baby’s.

“I want a hundred things,” she said, half laughing. “I want a dressing-gown for you, and something nice for Jamie Macdonnel, and a grand new dress to wear on Sundays. Lord Strathspey will be at church, you know, and — Well, I believe that is all.” And she ended with a face a thought more serious than it had been when she began, for she was stricken with a sudden recollection of the questionable appearance of her best attire.

“Couldn’t we manage to do something about the new dress, Prue?” he asked, with an odd

anxiety in his face, or an anxiety which was odd in a man of his kind; but they had held these economical consultations for years together, and to diplomatize seriously over the purchase of the hardly-earned girlish garments, was nothing new.

She shook her head with a certain sweet gravity.

“Oh, dear me!” she said, seriously, “we couldn’t think of it. You see there are all those people to be visited next week, and one can’t go without taking them something. Oh, dear me, no!”

He touched her soft brown hair with a regretful sigh. “Poor little bairn!” he said, “you have a hard life.”

She drew her arms tighter round his neck in a closer caress.

“No I haven’t,” she said lovingly. “It is you who have had the hard life, poor busy darling. I’m very happy. I don’t care about Lord Strathspey. I dare say he won’t look at me; and, besides, my dress is not so ugly, after all.”

But for all that, when she ran up stairs after dinner, to her pretty white bed-room, she took the questionable garment out of the wardrobe, and reviewed it with some anxiety. It was not the dress so much, but she had a childish awe of these stately Strathspeys, and a childish desire to appear well in their eyes.

And in the meantime, Lord Strathspey had gone back to the Coombe, with a curiously pleased recollection of a tender girlish face, and a pair of big innocent brown eyes, with a curious childish sweetness in them.

He was not a very good man, this Angus Lord Strathspey, and certainly not willfully a bad man; but for all that, he was just the sort of person to commit a wrong, through the careless light-handedness which was his chief characteristic. This very carelessness it was which had made him a stranger to his mother's home so long. The foreign lands, in which he had spent so many years, had pleased him well enough to hold him

rover; and, as he had no very conscientious scruples on the subject of his responsibilities, and was in nowise inclined to regard life seriously, he naturally made a point—of pleasing himself, I was going to say; but I think I can improve upon the phrase by saying, allowing himself to be pleased. The quiet little figure on the hill-side had pleased him, and the innocent face, and almost childish eyes, had struck him as something refreshing. Who did the innocent face belong to? He had no distinct recollection of having seen it before, and yet it seemed almost familiar to him. He broached the subject to his mother after dinner, when he rose to light his cigar; and he held a fuse to his “weed,” and puffed away enjoyably, as he described the little “apparition.”

“A little creature”—he said between the puffs, “like a brownie. A pretty child, with an innocent face, and a shabby dress on. Who is she?”

“My dear Angus,” expostulated her ladyship, “your child is a young lady. I think you must mean little Miss Renfrew, the rector’s daughter — and she is nearly eighteen years old.”

His lordship laughed. He had a musical laugh, by the way, with a clear refined ring in its tone; but this laugh was only the least of his attractions.

“Is she?” he said. “She has the face of a child of eight. I think I must go and see Renfrew.

“Angus,” said Lady Strathspey.

He laughed again; but colored a little, nevertheless.

“What is her name?” he asked.

“Prudence, I believe,” replied her ladyship, gravely; “and I really can’t permit you to go and talk nonsense to her, Angus. She is a good contented little thing — as good as she is pretty; so the poor people say.”

Strathspey knocked the ash from his cigar with

a smile. "She must be good enough, then," he said, with a thrill in his voice. "Those great, innocent eyes of hers are as beautiful as an angel's."

He did not say much more on the subject; but it was not forgotten, it is certain, though he did not call at the rectory that week. Perhaps his mother's evident disapproval had something to do with it, or perhaps his time was fully occupied. At any rate, Prue's demure touches of toilet were lost for a few days at least. In her awe of him, she had been staidly anxious to be in readiness, and had watched the road almost fearfully; but Saturday came, and Lord Strathspey had not made his appearance.

But on Sunday at church she saw him again. She had almost forgotten him, for the time being; but raising her head, after the first prayer, she caught a sudden glimpse of the handsome Saxon face, with its clear eyes, and the big golden moustache. He was looking at her, she discovered to

her great confusion, and in her momentary embarrassment, the sensitive color mounted even to her white temples. Strathspey smiled at the blush, it was so undisguised and innocent. This little Miss Renfrew was something of a novelty, it struck him; and the timid brown eyes, with the fluttered look in them, were even prettier than he had imagined.

He saw more of the rector's daughter that morning, than he heard of the rector's sermon. The small figure, which seemed almost lost in the big square pew, struck him with an odd sense of its childishness, and half unconsciously, he found himself following the soft low voice as it sounded the response. He could not help fancying, with a sort of amusement, that she felt some qualms of conscience on the subject of her first glance, she sat so quietly in one corner of the big pew, her pretty church-service in her hand, and her brown eyes upraised to her father.

When the service was concluded, it chanced

they left the church almost together, and on her way down the aisle, Prue saw the tall form before her; and as she passed out of the stone-porch Lady Strathspey turned and bowed to her, and then, Strathspey himself, turning also, raised his hat with a fair shapely hand, and remained standing for a moment looking after her, smiling faintly.

During the last week Prue had lived in a constant state of overawed expectation; but by the middle of the next, as the visitor had not made his appearance, the feeling wore off, and she neglected to watch the road altogether. He was not coming, she told herself. Perhaps he did not care to come, and then she drew a little sigh at the thought of her castles in the air. She discussed him gravely with Marjory, who was her household general and constant adviser, and next to her father, nearer to the innocent young creature's heart than any one in the world.

"He is very handsome, Marjory," she would

say naïvely, "and very grand ; but I think, if he had cared about us at all, or about the poor people either, he would have called to see papa before now."

But whether he cared for the poor people or not, he came at last, though it would have been useless watching the road for his coming, for his visit was the oddest of surprises.

It was late in the evening when he called, and Prue was in the dining-room alone. The lamps had not been brought in, for the rector was absent, and there was no light but the blaze of the fire, which revealed to Strathspey, with the opening of the door, the most natural little picture he had seen in his life.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

PRUE was kneeling upon the hearth, demure, in a little dusky home-dress ; her neglected work-basket stood upon the table ; her soft, disordered hair fell loosely around her half-childish figure, and with the ribbon which had tied it, she was teasing a sober gray cat of Marjory's, at whose dignified discomfiture she was laughing softly.

It was rather a difficult matter to meet seriously the horrified face she turned to her visitor, as she started up with Marjory's familiar in her arms, when his name was announced. It seemed so dreadful to her staid sense of the proprieties, to be discovered in such a position. I have no doubt, that, if she might have had her own way, he would have found her ready to receive him in

all the strength of timid decorousness with which she tried, poor child, to do honor to her father's calling, and so, no doubt, would have impressed him with an amused feeling of awkwardness; but now, taken by surprise as she was, she only looked wonderfully like a pretty child, and met him with the humblest little air in the world. In her reverence for his magnificence, she almost felt as if she had done him some injury, or annoyed him in some manner.

He advanced to meet her, holding his hat in his fair ungloved hand—a faint smile scarcely controllable, even by his self-possession, touching his lips.

What a grave offence the little *contretemps* evidently was to her, poor little thing, and how pretty her fluttered embarrassment made her.

“Miss Renfrew, I conclude?” he said, questioningly, and on receiving her timid bow of acquiescence, he extended the fair hand with good-natured unceremoniousness.

“I am Strathspey,” he said. “I think we know each other a little already, Miss Renfrew, and I for one am more than pleased to improve the acquaintance.”

His careless gracefulness of manner set her more at ease. It was a peculiarity of his to be easy and unembarrassed on all occasions, and it was one of the peculiarities which made him always popular. Just now it helped Prue to recover her self-possession sufficiently to return his greeting with the little touch of sober dignity which was natural to her.

She was very sorry that her father was not at home, she told him. He would be disappointed. Probably, if his lordship would be seated, and allow her to ring for lights, he would not be long absent.

“He had only one or two calls to make, I believe,” she added, “and he is never very late.”

Strathspey smiled. The touch of grave dignity pleased him as much as her innocent young face

had done. Looking down at her small figure, he could not help being impressed as much as if she had been some child playing the serious, oft-repeated game, of being a woman.

“I shall be glad to avail myself of your invitation,” he said. “Indeed, I don’t know whether upon the whole, my visit was not intended for you, Miss Renfrew.”

The brown eyes opened with a serious timidity, which was like distress. What was he going to say?

“I have been a rover so long, you see,” he explained, “that I dare say my tenants feel that I have neglected them a little. My mother tells me that you have been very kind to the poor people — quite a Lady Bountiful, in fact, and I am anxious to thank you for it, if my thanks are worth anything.”

She blushed slightly, in her innocent surprise at his praises. She had lived her quiet life so wholly for these people, that she had never dreamed of being thanked for her labors.

“We—papa and I—try to take care of them,” she returned, simply; “but I don’t think I have done anything worth thanks. What I do is so little among so many, you know,” with a deprecating upraising of her eyes.

“What you have done, I cannot sufficiently thank you for,” he said, something like a thrill of admiration roused by her sweet face. “Lady Strathspey says you ought to be a reproach to my self-indulgence. It is my duty to look after these people, she tells me,” smiling a little, “so, as the nearest way out of a difficulty, I thought I would refer to you. If you will only promise to tell me what they want, Miss Renfrew, and call upon me for any assistance which is required, you will relieve me wonderfully. I am not what people call an energetic person, I believe, and my responsibilities are too much for me.”

“I will promise that papa will,” she said, with grave naïveté, “and I am sure the people will be very thankful. Some of them are very poor indeed, and — we are not very rich ourselves.”

She had overcome her first awe of him by this time. She was too thoroughly simply girl-like to be conscious for any length of time; and, besides, it pleased her so much to know that her pensioners were to be well cared for at last. Though it had never occurred to her, the life she had led, since she had been old enough to assume any responsibility, had really been a hard one. The work which had fallen into her young hands had been never-ending, and, in the eyes of any one less simple and tender, would have appeared the most thankless of labor. They were not all pleasantness, these long rounds of visits to poor, ailing, and sometimes not very grateful people; but poor little Prue had a staid conscientious scrupulousness on the subject of her duties, and would no more have thought of shirking one of them, than of doing anything else widely foreign to her affectionate nature. Strathspey found this out in the course of the evening, and the soft-voiced little creature's serious sense of her re-

sponsibilities, almost amused him. Her quaint affection for her father, was one of these responsibilities, he discovered. It was not the commonplace love of a commonplace girl; it was something more novel — something which was more the result of long companionship and trial-sharing; and it made her visitor feel that he had come upon a new phase of life.

“ You see,” she explained, simply, “ we are not like anybody else — we are more to each other; papa has nobody but me, and I have nobody but papa.”

It was difficult to believe his watch, Strathspey thought, when he referred to it at last. Time had flown so fast, and so pleasantly he acknowledged to himself, looking down at the girlish face, with its sweet serious eyes, and frame of falling hair like brown autumn leaves. It was a thought odd, too, that an evening spent as this had been, discussing broth and blankets, and rheumatic old women, with a quiet little girl, should have

pleased him so much ; but it had pleased him, and his face showed his enjoyment of it when he shook hands with her.

“You must let us see you at the Coombe,” he said. “You are a great favorite of my mother’s, Miss Renfrew, and the old place is dull enough at present, Heaven knows. Don’t forget your charitable promise of assistance either, and thank you for the pleasantest evening I have spent for years.”

When he was gone, Prue went back to her favorite seat upon the hearth-rug, and abandoned herself to her thoughts, in a flood of admiring happiness. She had seen the hero. He had been and gone, and his visit had probably been the greatest excitement in her life. She gave herself up to her admiration entirely. She thought of every word he had uttered, and of every gesture he had made, going over his graceful speeches again and again. She thought of his handsome face, and his musical, indolent voice ; nay, even

of the crested seal-ring on his white hand, and the big blonde mustache ; and, when the rector returned, he found her still upon the hearth, resting her round chin upon the palm of her hand, and gazing into the fire with softly-flushed cheeks.

“Oh, papa!” she said, turning as he entered, “I am so glad you have come. Somebody has been here to see you, and guess who it was—Lord Strathspey.”

CHAPTER III.

A NEW SITUATION.

THE Renfrews heard a great deal of Strathspey in the weeks that followed. To tell the truth, when he had discovered that things were not in such bad order after all, and that he was not to be troubled with any particular abundance of business detail, he was not averse to sauntering over his estate on sunny mornings, and dropping into the cottages with a few pleasant words, or good-natured jests for the inmates; and he was also not averse to being listened to, and looked up to, with the honest admiration and respect with which the good people regarded him. "A braw young fellow, the laird is," the most taciturn of them said—and it was quite natural that they should be so impressed. A certain careless *bonhommie* had been born with the

man, and together with his handsome face, it won people into believing in him, and taking his good qualities for granted. If his experience had bored him in the slightest degree, it is quite probable that his visits would not have been repeated; not from any real ill-nature, but simply because his good impulses were of a negative order, and he had an easy knack of avoiding annoyances; but it so chanced that there was a sort of novelty about it, and then it pleased his mother, and — Well, shall I tell the truth of this man, who was less a hero than anything else, and say, that he had a faint amused idea that the little creature with the brown eyes would hear of his bounteousness, and exalt him in her innocent way.

They had no great wants, these poor hard-living, simple people; and, to a man in his position, it was easy enough to supply, here and there, their simple meals. So it came about, that Prue heard his praises everywhere, and, hearing them, listened with a thrill of delight.

He came again to the rectory in the course of a few days, and, as before, his visit was something of a surprise. Prue was in the kitchen, as she often was, making some little delicacy for one of her pensioners—the Jamie Macdonnel of whom she had spoken to her father. The boy had been a cripple for years, and since her very childhood, Prue had regarded him as her chief care. She was very deeply interested in her work, for it was one of her principal characteristics to be as earnest in a small way over tarts and dusters, as she was over greater things. Perhaps, in all her life, she had never performed any simple action without a certain degree of conscientious thoughtfulness—it was so natural to her to be simply conscientious and thoughtful. She was so deeply engaged in this case, that she almost forgot everything else; and it was not very long before Marjory, arranging her master's room, heard the sweet, quiet voice from the kitchen speaking to her.

“I think they are done now, Marjory. Which shelf is the raspberry-jam on, if you please?”

Marjory laid down her duster, and came into the kitchen at once; but, reaching the door, she stopped with an expression of scandalized astonishment.

“Miss Prue!” she exclaimed, “For Gudeness sake!”

Prue turned her flushed young face from the open oven, before which she was kneeling in a sober sort of approval of her handiwork, and, turning, blushed more deeply than ever at the discovery she made.

Strathspey was standing at the open side-door, smiling a little, as if he had discovered something new; but still not without a certain appreciation of the novelty in his eyes.

There was something almost like apologetic appeal in Prue’s face as she rose.

“Oh, dear!” she said, with unconscious piteousness, “I am so sorry; pray excuse me. I was making pies, and I did not see you.”

“Excuse *me*,” he said, laughing in spite of himself. “It is I who ought to ask pardon. I could not make you hear, Miss Prudence, and I really was obliged to take the liberty of coming round here. I shall have a better appetite for pies in future, however. The old nursery rhyme is true, after all, I see —

‘The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer day.’

May I come in ?”

“Into the parlor, you may,” she answered, slyly glancing down at her bare, childish white arms, and big apron. “Not into here, if you please. Marjory will show you the way. Papa is at home, I believe.”

He did not remain long enough to add to her embarrassment, only long enough to say a few graceful words, and then he followed Marjory; but he remained a sufficient length of time — even though it was only a few seconds — to intimate to her that his visit was not for her father

alone, and that he should be disappointed if she did not join them.

Of course, she could do nothing else. She had always assisted her father to receive his visitors, and so, in a short time, Strathspey turned at the sound of the opening door, to see the little figure in its trim homely dress, enter quietly.

Her father stretched out his hand to her, and drew her to his side caressingly, with the old softening of his rugged Scottish face.

“You have seen my little girl before, my lord!” he said.

Strathspey bowed, his eyes kindling at the sight of the glow of quiet color which rose on the girlish cheeks.

“Prue and I are not like father and bairn, are we, Prue?” said the rector, smiling a thought sadly, as he touched her brown hair. “We are something nearer to each other; but I am afraid I make a dull life of it for her sometimes, poor child.”

It was a pleasant morning to Prue. Months after she looked back, and wondered if it was possible that she had ever been the girl who sat at her father's side, listening to the clear, indolent voice, and glancing up now and then at the handsome face to admire it. He had come to discuss some improvements he intended making in the church, and there was an eager sweetness in her eyes as she took part in the conversation. It seemed that Strathspey appealed to her as often as to her father; and, as to the rector himself, he turned to his young helpmeet, at every other word, with as serious a confidence in her softly-spoken suggestions, as if she had been the oldest inhabitant of the parish. "Prue can tell us; Prue knows all about it," he would say every moment, showing that she was an absolute necessity to him, as, indeed, she was. Strathspey found himself smiling more than once at her, with her grave little ways, and the half-childish, half-womanly air of protection and advice, which

seemed so natural to her in her intercourse with her father. Every man, woman, and child in the place seemed to share her thoughtful interest and carefulness.

"How did you learn to know all these people so well?" Strathspey asked her on one occasion, when she had given them a much-desired piece of information.

"I visit them," she answered simply. "I am obliged to go to see everybody, you know."

"Is it because you like to go?" he asked, actually almost touched by his fancy of this gentle little creature, living her innocent life, in such constant loneliness and labor.

She blushed faintly under his earnest eye, and looked down.

"Sometimes it is because I like to do it," was her naïve reply, "and sometimes it is because I think I ought to."

She was called out of the room by Marjory, shortly after this, on the behalf of some poor

woman, who was waiting for her in the kitchen, so he only caught a glimpse of her as she passed out ; and she looked up from the basket she was filling, to bid him a sweet good-morning ; but he went away with a half-tender smile on his lips, and a curious feeling of pity for her, and admiration of her kindly, gentle ways, filling his mind.

Prue went back to the room, when she had finished her work, and, as she entered, she saw her father standing at the window, and she fancied that his face had a look of relief upon it. She went to him, and clasped her hands through his arm, in the quiet caressing fashion, which never failed to show itself when she was near him.

“Don’t you think the people will be better for his coming back, papa, dear ?” she said.

“Yes,” he answered. “And we shall be better, too, my bairn, or, so he says.”

She looked up with a little glow of grateful relief.

“Oh, papa! Did he really say so?”

“Yes,” said the rector. “He tells me that he had never thought of the matter before, until he accidentally happened to have his notice called to it, and now he wishes to repair the wrong he considers has been done me.”

The big, innocent eyes glared like a little child’s as Prue nestled on her father’s arm.

“How good he is!” she said, softly. “How good he is!”

And then her sweet gratefulness fell into silence, and lay in her heart, the germ of a fair flower, to burst, in after days, into passionate blooming.

CHAPTER IV.

W A V E R I N G .

THE life in the brown-gabled rectory was a very quiet one, so quiet, indeed, that but for her responsibilities, the rector's daughter would have been as completely lost to the outer world, as if she had been shut up in some enchanted castle.

The rector was often absent, and, as little or no company came to the house, Marjory and her young companion lived their lives almost like ogress and fairy princess. But, after this second visit of Lord Strathspey's, a gradual change came about. In the course of a few weeks, hardly a day passed without the tall, graceful figure lounging up the gravel-walk, the handsome, careless face always touched with a sort of amused admiration of the grave childish eyes and gentle voice.

He called on the rector to discuss the improvements he was making on the church ; he called on Prue to ask advice ; he called to talk to her about Jamie Macdonnel, with whom he had struck up a sort of friendship ; and last, but by no means least, he called to while away the hours, which now and then hung heavily at Coombe-Ashley. Why not ? The innocent little creature touched and amused him with her faithful conscientiousness, and truth to tell, sometimes thrilled him not a little with her unconscious gravity and tender words. He brought her fruits and flowers, too, sometimes—hot-house grapes and nectarines, and bouquets of hot-house flowers ; and when she thanked him, he would laugh in his careless, musical fashion, at her pretty gratitude.

“ Don’t thank me,” he would say, with a sort of indolent enjoyment of her. “ Thank Lady Strathspey—her hot-house furnishes them, not mine, Miss Prue.” But once he added suddenly, “ No ; thank me. I believe I must claim your

thanks after all, even if I don't deserve them. They are so sweet to me." And Prue stopped, with a swift beat of her childish heart, and looked up at him gravely, and then looked down, the soft color creeping upward, even to the folds of her brown hair.

No one ever uttered such words to her before; no one had ever smiled down into her eyes with the tenderness which touched this fair, handsome face, and she remembered the words, and dreamed over them with a childlike thrill of happy wonder at their meaning. It never occurred to her that they were careless words, carelessly uttered.

Strathspey had smiled to himself, in his amusement at her blush and gravity. As I said at first, he allowed himself to be pleased, and the poor, ignorant child was pleasing him. He never paused to think where he was leading her to, he never asked himself what the result would be. It was enough that the days were dull at the Coombe, and that the rector's daughter made them pass less heavily.

“The little innocent!” he said to himself, as he sauntered home that evening. “How sweet she looked! How sweet she is really! She almost looked as if she believed me. I wonder if she did?”

But she had believed him seriously and tenderly enough. How could the poor, earnest, conscientious, truth-telling child do otherwise. Her old pleasure in his kindness was growing slowly into something newer and deeper. She never tried to fathom it — she was not woman enough for that; she only thrilled, and glowed, and dreamed, as if she had been a very child, reading a strange story, dwelling on every word, and forgetting that an end must come.

Her tell-tale face, with its blush and drooping eyes, brought him again and again. A girl of seventeen, who was so thoroughly unread in worldliness as this young creature, was a novelty to him, even though he had seen women of all countries and orders. Her grave, softly-spoken

"My lord," gave him a vague thrill of pleasure every time it was uttered, it sounded so like the sweet speech of a child. In time, the people who knew them began to watch for the two figures passing together, the handsome head bending low over the little straw hat as they walked, for it rarely happened that she went out without meeting him somewhere or other. Sometimes it was upon the moor, with his rifle in his hand, and his game-bag slung over his shoulder; sometimes it was sauntering through the lanes, with a rather bored expression on his face, and something like a wearied frown knitting his white forehead; but wherever he was, or however intense the boredom had been, he never failed to brighten when he spoke to her. Sometimes he walked on a little by her side, talking graceful nonsense to her and watching her bright, serious little face. It was so easy to talk graceful nonsense to her, and so easy to bring that grave, shy silence upon her, which amused, even while it touched him. Her

very simplicity of belief was her great charm for him. It was such a refreshing, curious thing to see her droop her brown eyes over the old platitudes which other women would have laughed at, for the reason that they had heard them a hundred times before. But Prue had not heard them a hundred times before — she had not even heard them once. She had read of such things, perhaps, in the one or two quaint novels she had met with in her father's library, and the men who said them had always been terribly in earnest in their love-making. How, I ask, could she be anything but sweetly serious when this hero of hers, who was, in her eyes, the most magnificent of created beings, told her that his happiest hours were spent at her side, and that she helped him from the boredom of Coombe-Ashley when nothing else could. So it went on, and she listened and believed, and wondered that her romantic happiness was not a dream; and looking up at him and seeing with her own truthful, ignorant eyes, saw no further

than the careless, smiling lips and graceful speeches. Her father, full of his labors and blindly unconscious, only saw that the sweet face was growing sweeter, the soft voice softer, and the gentle, tender ways more winning every day, and so was content in her happiness. She never returned after an absence, without stopping in his room for a few minutes; but thinking of her only as the "bairn" he had cherished in his sad heart and carried in his arms, it never struck him as singular that she rarely came in without mentioning his patron's name. "I saw Lord Strathspey, papa dear," she would say. "He was at Donald Ross's." Or sometimes, "Who do you suppose I met on the Brae? His lordship; and he told me to tell you that he would call to see you to-night about the church, if you were at liberty."

Now and then, instead of bringing his flowers himself, Strathspey sent them by one of the servants of the Coombe, and in that case there was

always a graceful message or a dashing note, stamped with his crest of a gray falcon, and signed, "Your friend, Strathspey." And on one of these occasions, the rector looked up from his sermon after the door had closed upon the messenger, to see Prue standing at the window with the gravest of young faces, the flowers in one hand, the open note in the other.

"What is it, my bairn?" he asked.

She turned with a little start, not coloring, only looking a shade more thoughtful than was even usual with her.

"I was only thinking," she said.

"Of what?" he asked again.

A tinge of color rose into her cheeks then.

"I hardly know, papa," she said softly.

Perhaps it was the only time she had concealed anything from him in all her life; nay, I am sure it was, but it was not so easy, in her girlish ignorance and uncertainty, to tell him that she was dreaming over the note she held in her hand.

“Coombe-Ashley is boring me again, Miss Prue,” her hero said, “So I send you a bouquet, as a herald of my intention to throw myself on your mercy for the hundredth time. I wonder if you care enough for me to wear a cluster of these white fuchsias in your hair to-night.

“STRATHSPEY.”

She put the flowers into her prettiest vase, with the tender silence upon her. It was too much for her, poor child, this careless “I wonder if you care for me enough,” over which — if she had only known the truth — the writer had smiled at his indolent fancy of how the little thing would droop her shining eyes over it, and flush in her lovable, half-frightened way.

She dreamed of it all through the day, and when night came, she went up to her room to dress, and when she had finished, looked at herself in the glass as she had never looked at herself before. The new dress had come in its good

time ; but it was not a very grand one, though really the brightest she had ever worn, being a gay little tartan plaid, almost coquettish in its brilliancy of color. It was wonderfully becoming too, — the very contrast necessary to her brown eyes and snowy skin ; and the knot of scarlet ribbon in her hair was almost artistic. It was not much of a toilet, after all ; but when after fastening the drooping white fuchsias in the ribbon, she stepped back from the mirror to look at herself, I think it quite probable that there was not a woman in the land who might not have envied the pure, sweet, dark-eyed face of the rector's little daughter.

When Strathspey came, the parlor was bright with fire and lamp-light, and in the rector's chair the slender young figure waited patiently. Such a face as it was which turned toward him — softly bright — expectant ; everything yet still sobered, as it always was, with that touch of innocent gravity and reserve which always seemed like an

unconscious shadow of her father's deeper reticence.

"Papa was obliged to go out," she began, with a faint little effort at self-possession. "He was very sorry, and he told me to apologize to you." And there she stopped, for the handsome eyes were smiling her down with their glow of tender pleasure.

Inwardly, Strathspey was rejoicing in the absence which Prue had thought required an apology. The bright room, and the soft voice, would be more enjoyable without the grave face looking on. He took his seat near her, with a certain sense of novel enjoyment of his position. He wanted to talk to her, to please her, and make her show her pleasure in her simple way; he wanted to see the big, dark brown eyes fill with that fluttered, tender timorousness, and he addressed himself well to his work. It was so easy to please her, poor little thing, and it was so easy to make himself a hero and a demi-god in her ignorant eyes; and, besides, her grave, believing

ignorance was sufficiently refreshing to him to throw a novel grace into his manner of describing old scenes, which, but for this sense of their being so new to her, would have been worn out and threadbare.

He did not speak of the flowers at first; but it was not very long, before rising from his seat to get a book from a side-table, he stopped near her chair, and touched the white cluster with his hand.

“Did you wear them because I asked you to do so?” he said.

She did not blush as he had expected she would; nay, her face was almost pale, he fancied, and she did not look up at him even—only answered lowly and softly like a child,

“Yes, my lord.”

He went back to his seat smiling. Had Lady Strathspey been right, in saying that he must not talk nonsense to her. What would her ladyship say if she heard his pretty speeches? For a moment he was not quite comfortable, through a

vague feeling, that perhaps this innocent amusement of his was not so innocent after all. Still, there are few men who would have found it easy to resist the temptation, and Strathspey was not one of them. The faint impression was as soon dead as born, and, the next moment, he was smiling at her blushes again, and making fresh speeches, more gallant and careless than he had ever uttered before.

He paused at the door, as he bade her good-night; and, as she waited in her shy, silent way for him to relieve the fingers he held, her up-raised speechful eyes tempted him once more. Such a soft, slender little hand as it was to hold—such a soft, slender, fair little hand!

“Is there a spell upon the room, that I never want to leave it,” he said, half-jestingly, half-tenderly, “or is it that you always make me so happy?” And then with his good-night, he raised the fair, little hand to his lips, and kissed it.

CHAPTER V.

HOW SHE HEARD THE NEWS.

A GRAVE face old Marjory's, at the best of times—always a grave face; but the time came when its gravity was deeper than ever, and when even its many lines and furrows were deeper too. Women are quicker than men in the instinct of seeing danger ahead, particularly when the danger is danger to one of themselves; and, in the case of her young nursling, Marjory had been quicker to see the dangerous truth than her master had, dear as this one ewe lamb was to him in his lonely, laboring life. As the weeks followed one another, and the winter grew older, Prue's fate had been weaving itself out. The unceremonious evening visits, the chance meetings, the graceful idle speeches, could not be without a result, and their result was just the

natural one. What had been easy at first, became easier as time passed on ; for she had learned to love this man, through her very belief in him. The hours were scarcely long enough to dream her innocent day-dreams in, the undefined yet intense happiness filled her from morning till night ; the old, quiet life returned to her mind as something lost forever, something over which a great change had come, something to which she could never go back. With Strathspey it had been nothing more than drifting on, day by day. It had been a pleasanter winter than he had expected, or his rector's daughter had made it so. Circumstances had thrown him in her way, and circumstances had given her a charm for him, and he was a man whom circumstances governed completely ; so it was that the spirit of the hour ruled him, and no day passed without some new move being made in the old, graceful, indolent, careless game.

But, whoever else was blind, Marjory was not.

She had seen this old, graceful game played before, and its ending had been one which filled her honest old Puritan heart with horror—not that she ever dreamed of such an ending to her nursling's story; but “The bairn is but a bairn after a’,” she said to herself sadly, “and I canna stan’ by and see her wranged.”

It would have been a hard matter to speak to the “bairn” herself; nay, how could she? The sweet, serious face was so tenderly bright, in these days; the brown eyes were so full of a new belief and happiness. It seemed as though a new life had come to her. How could she cloud it with such a warning?

“I canna do it,” the faithful old creature said to herself, after many sad hours of pondering. “I canna do it mysel’, so I maun e’en speak to the rector.”

So it was, that, watching her opportunity, she came into her master's study one evening, when he was alone, and broached the subject to him, with much faltering and grief.

“She’s no a bairn any langer, master,” she ended, smiling sorrowfully. “Canna ye see that this braw young laird has stepped in between us?”

A strong, sudden pang came upon her master, as he listened. He had never dreamed of this before, and here he had awakened from his fancied security, to find that his child was his no longer. Child! Nay, this faithful, ignorant woman, who had been quicker-sighted than he, for all his lore, had been right in saying that their bairn had become a woman.

“She is only seventeen,” he said, with a new recurrence of the sudden pain. “And yet—How blind I have been. Poor bairn! Poor little Prue!”

When Marjory went back to her kitchen, she heard her master’s feet, in his room above, pacing slowly and heavily to and fro. She heard them for two long hours, never resting for a moment, only treading backward and forward, in dull

monotony. When his pretty young wife lay dead in her chamber, Marjory remembered that she had heard his slow feet through the whole of the dreary winter's day, and remembered, too, how she had hushed the little brown-eyed baby closer to her breast, weeping silent, heavy tears over the sad echo.

Perhaps, as he pondered over the grave truth to which he had newly awakened, a sorrowful memory of his child's dead young mother stirred up his heart, and his old sorrow for the lonely life his little helpmeet had led, grew stronger as he thought of the difference a mother's care would have made.

When Prue returned, after her absence, it was almost dark, and, going up-stairs, she opened the study-door, to find her father sitting in his chair, by the dull embers, resting his head upon his hand. Something in his face struck her sadly, and, with a little pang of affectionate self-reproach, she went and knelt beside him upon the

hearth. But it was not so easy to talk now as it used to be, and, besides, she felt half sad herself this evening. She scarcely knew why, sometimes such sadness came upon her — half tenderness, half pain; but the time had not come yet when she could ask herself its meaning.

“I have been to the church, papa,” she began to tell him. “It is getting along beautifully. It will be completed by Christmas, Lord Strathspey says.”

“Was Lord Strathspey with you this evening, Prue?” he asked, gently.

She did not look up at him, and the red blood mounted to her cheeks, as she answered softly, playing with her gloves,

“Yes, papa.” For his quiet voice held just the thoughtful sadness of his face.

He laid his hand upon her pretty brown hair with a gentle touch — a touch as gentle as her dead mother’s could have been, and, at last, as if unconsciously, he drew her head to its old childish resting-place upon his knee.

“He has been with you very often of late, has he not?” he questioned. “Prue,” with the same thoughtful sadness in his tone, “is this grand young laird coming between my bairn’s heart and mine?”

“Oh, papa!” she faltered. “Oh, papa!” and broke down into a gush of tender, innocent tears.

There was a long silence then, and the poor child knelt with hidden face, tremulous, sorrowful, happy. How could he speak, and tell her his sad fears? How could he crush her fresh young dreams, by telling her that the chances were against her, and that it might be that a realization would never come; that there was scarcely a hope that a realization could come to a dream so romantic as hers. The warning had come too late. Man, as he was, he saw that, and, in his great extremity, he could only stroke the bent, girlish head, with a stronger sense of pain. There was nothing more to be said. The wrong was done already, and, through his very tender-

ness for her trusting love, he could only hide his doubts, and hope for the best.

He tried to talk cheerfully to her during the remainder of the evening; but it was only the shadow of cheerfulness; and when he bade her good-night, he held her in his arms for a moment, with a tremor on his square mouth, which was strangely unlike his usual reticent self-control.

“Don’t let us forget to trust each other, Prue,” he said. “Don’t let this strange lover make us forget what we have been to each other all our two lives.”

When Marjory came to bring his bed-room candle to him, he had gone back to his place at the fire, and was seated just as Prue had found him.

She came to his side, holding the candle in her hand, and, with her usual quaint freedom and sympathy, spoke to him at once.

“Can it be helped, master?” she asked.

He raised his head with a faint smile—such a mournful ghost of a smile.

“No, Marjory,” he said. “Our bairn is ours no longer. We were too late.”

The winter ended as it had begun ; the purple heath began to bloom upon the braes, and Strathspey was still at Coombe-Ashley. The quiet life among the quiet people had actually begun to have a sort of negative attraction for him ; and, perhaps, the quiet little figure, which sat in the great rectory-pew on Sundays, held a sort of attraction for him too. The sweet young face, with its belief and trustfulness, was not a face to tire a man soon, and, in some sort, it held him captive. Sometimes, in an idle way, he had even amused himself by fancying how it would look at the stately old Coombe, and had pictured to himself the sweet, startled happiness, which would leap into the brown eyes, if he made his careless love-making a truth, and told her that it was so. Not that it had ever been anything more than an idle, whimsical day-dream, this fancy of his. It would have needed more moral

courage than ever Lord Strathspey had possessed, to have faced out such a proceeding with the world—his world, which was a world not easy to face, my reader, after committing a romantic absurdity. What would Lady Strathspey have said, if he had announced his intention of ending his career, by marrying his rector's daughter. Lady Strathspey alone would have been too much for him to cope with. Besides, how would the little creature look in London, among women who would envy her for her beauty, and snub her for her humility. Poor little, brown-eyed Prue, she was afraid of Lady Strathspey, who was more gracious to her than to any living being; and how would she be able to meet the sneers and patronage which she would have to encounter, as the inferior party, in a *mesalliance* in society, to which she was only admitted on sufferance. Even his idle day-dream never ended without such additional thoughts as these; and yet he could not quite make up his mind to flee

the temptation. So the spring came, and he still lingered; one day half inclined to bring his trifling to an end, the next half touched by an indolent regret that his fate had not been a different one, or that he had not been more chary. Some faint twinges of conscience struck him now and then, when a shadow of the possible result passed through his mind. It could not last forever, and an end must come, in the natural course of events. I wonder if it is possible, that but for the interposition of a cooler hand, this quiet story of mine might ever have ended as happily as other stories have done; if it is possible that the tender girlish face would ever have wrought upon him, so as to arouse his stronger nature to its best. (Let us, at least, give each other the comfort of believing, that even in the weakest of us there is a "best.") It might have proved so; but it was not to be. The simple life was fated to hold its quiet tragedy, and it worked itself out.

“I cannot let you talk nonsense to the little creature,” Lady Strathspey had said at first; but when, in the course of time, she found that her warning had been disregarded, and that the wrong was done, her slight feeling of annoyance became something very much stronger. This would never do, she decided, in some matronly trepidation. Men had been led into more absurd things than ever this might prove, she told herself, as the result of propinquity and country visits. This little daughter of the rector’s was a sweet, lady-like young creature, and, if no one interfered, Angus might carry his amusements too far, and do something absurd and romantic. She was too thoroughly a high-bred woman, and —let me add— too thorough a diplomatist, to let her anxiety and annoyance reveal themselves to either of their objects; on the contrary, she extended her really good-natured condescension to the Renfrews more cordially than ever. She talked to Prue about her pensioners as unceremo-

niously as her natural stateliness of manner would permit; she called at the rectory once or twice, and never failed to send some graceful message of remembrance, through the rector, to his daughter; but, in the meantime, she did not forget that she had rather a difficult and delicate matter to dispose of.

Strathspey returned to the Coombe one evening, after a few hours' absence, to find her ladyship seated at her desk, writing a letter. He was not in the most cheerful of humors, and he scarcely remarked it at first; but, after a few moments' silence, she raised her head.

"I am writing to Gwendoline Framley, Angus," she said. "I believe I forgot to mention to you that I received a letter from her yesterday, in which she speaks of coming to Coombe-Ashley. Here it is—read it." And she handed him a double sheet of thick cream-colored paper, crossed and re-crossed with delicate, flowing chirography, perfumed faintly with wood-violets, and stamped with a pretty monogram.

Strathspey opened it with a slightly heightened color. He remembered the young lady well, as a superb, fair girl, with whom he had spent the pleasantest month of his life one summer a few years before, when he had chanced to meet her party at a wonderful little, many-balconied hotel, on the shores of Lake Geneva. She was a beautiful young creature, the belle of her first season then, as she had been the belle of the two seasons since; and, in spite of his claim of a distant relationship, Strathspey had only been one of a dozen others who were ready to fall at her dainty feet and worship. Still he could not help feeling a slight thrill, as the faint odor of wood-violets floated up to him, for he remembered she had been very fond of wood-violets, and had sentimentalized over them in a very pretty, girlish way.

It was a very charming letter; graceful, full of pretty phrases, and nice little turns of speech; lady-like, elegant—all that could be desired, and

withal, tinged with a little spirit of delicate satire, which gave it a piquant sort of flavor.

“I am weary of amusing stupid people, and being stupidly amused, dear Lady Strathspey,” she wrote, “and I believe that a visit to Coombe-Ashley would be a means of recruiting me for next season’s exertions. Even *debutantes* are allowed a few weeks’ rest from their difficult labor of charming and being charmed, and I am not a *debutante*, you know. Pray do be good enough to invite me to spend a month among the bracken with you.”

“I am writing to repeat my old invitation,” said her ladyship, carelessly, as Strathspey returned the missive to her. “I shall be very much pleased to see her. She is a very charming girl, I believe, though I only remember her as a child.”

Nothing more was said at the time. She finished her letter, and the next day it was on its way to England; but regarded, as a stroke of

diplomacy, the double sheet of cream-colored paper, with its soft fragrance of wood-violets, had been a success. For a moment it had blotted out the innocent face and tender eyes, the winter evenings spent in the rectory parlor were forgotten, the rector's daughter was a myth, and Strathspey had gone back to the time when he sauntered on the shores of Lake Geneva, talking graceful nonsense to Gwendoline Framley, and carrying her dainty parasol.

But still the impression was not strong enough to destroy the older fancy completely, and in the course of a few days, he was at the rectory again.

CHAPTER VI.

GLOOMY FOREBODINGS.

“WE are going to have a visitor at the Coombe,” he said to Prue, during the evening. “You must come and see her, Miss Prue. She is a belle and a beauty ; as great a belle as any of the heroines of the stories I tell you sometimes. I dare say she has even been presented at court,” with a light laugh, “and broken as many hearts as there are buttons on that pretty dress of yours.”

The brown eyes softened into the sober gravity which was so quaintly natural to them.

“I think I should be afraid of her,” said Prue, staidly. “I am not accustomed to grand people, and I am always afraid of them.”

“So am I,” said Strathspey, laughing again. “It is quite natural, Miss Prue.”

It was a lovely evening. To this poor, ignorant child it was loveliest she had ever known; certainly it was the last in which she experienced unalloyed happiness. She sat in a low basket-chair before the open window, the moonlight streaming in upon her white dress and fair face — a face so very fair and pure, contrasted in the mystic light with her great soft eyes, that watching her, Strathspey forgot himself, forgot the world, forgot even Gwendoline Framley, and spoke to her as men will often speak under the influence of a fair face and a sweet voice.

She listened to him with a wild thrill of happiness, her great, innocent eyes lifted up to his, as he leaned against the window, and looked down at her, more perfect and glorious, she thought, than he had ever seemed before. She looked forward to nothing — the future was nothing; it was quite enough to sit in the moonlight, and thrill at every word he uttered.

There was a box of mignonette on the window-

sill, and as he was going away, he bent and broke a spray from it.

“Do you know what it means?” he asked.

He had just bidden her good-night then, and she was standing at his side, a quiet little ghost of a white-robed figure, with a fair, believing face.

“No,” the sweet, serious voice answered him.

“It means ‘my little darling,’ ” he said softly. “Stay; let me fasten it in that ribbon at your throat.”

He bent to secure it, and she raised her face a little—the fair girl’s face, tender, innocent, truthful; and as the moonshine fell upon its pure gravity, it thrilled him so that everything else was lost to him. He stooped a shade lower; the big, golden mustache brushed her lips—he had kissed her once, twice, thrice.

“Forgive me, little Puritan angel,” he whispered; “your sweet eyes were too much for me. Good night.”

And in a minute more she was standing alone, watching his tall, slender form, as he strode down the road, her heart beating in great slow throbs of tremulous happiness and pain.

She carried her mignonette up stairs to the little white bed-room, and laid it between the leaves of her Bible, as if it had been some sacred thing, and then she knelt down in the moonlight, and prayed a tender, girl-like prayer. There was no single doubt or fear in her pure trustfulness.

His sudden, tender kisses could mean only one thing to this young creature, with her quiet life—he loved her—he loved her!

As to Strathspey, he went home with a slight sense of discomfort upon him. Possibly, he had made a fool of himself, he began to think, after a few minutes' deliberation. The temptation had been a great one; but perhaps, after all, it had been rather an indiscreet thing to give way to it. He was not an absolute villain, of course; and

the idea that he had probably gone somewhat too far made him feel slightly uncomfortable.

It was not an impression likely to last long, but still it was there for the time being.

Once or twice during his acquaintance with his rector's daughter, he had actually found himself almost unwisely in earnest; and that he had been unwisely in earnest to-night, cool reflection showed him. A vision of Lady Strathspey rose in his mind, and then — shall I acknowledge it — came the remembrance of the cream-colored letter, with its odor of wood-violets. It was odd how, as this recollection became stronger, his thoughts veered and faltered. Perhaps a few minutes before he had been nearer the dangerous weakness of doing something absurd and romantic, as Lady Strathspey put it, than he had ever been before; but the memory of the odor of wood-violets brought him back to the world of realities. This little creature, with her gentle Puritan ways, was not the woman to be Lady Strathspey, fair and

pure as she might be; but Gwendoline Framley was another person. "I am afraid of grand people," Prue had said. Gwendoline would have "cut" the Dowager Duchess of Buccleugh herself, if she had deemed it necessary, as calmly as she would have ignored Mrs. John Smith at a charity ball.

The windows of the Coombe were brightly lighted, he saw, on reaching the lodge-gates, and, on entering the house, he suddenly remembered that his mother had told him that her guest would be likely to arrive at a late hour. It was quite possible that she had arrived a day or so earlier than was anticipated. He crossed the hall with a quick sense of expectation, and opened the door.

Yes, she had come. She was standing near a table, turning over a portfolio of engravings, the light shining upon her fair hand and delicate profile, even the simple posture which she had fallen into showing the perfection of thorough-bred

grace, from the turn of sloping shoulders to the sweep of her light dress.

She had been beautiful as a girl of seventeen, he remembered; but at twenty, her beauty had more than fulfilled its promise. Her delicate face had more repose; every feature was as clear cut as a cameo; her blue-gray, velvet eyes, under their thick lashes, had that almost impossible translucent darkness which no other eyes ever have.

She looked up as he approached, uncertain a moment, and then her face lighted as only a pretty, graceful girl's can.

"I don't think it would be easy for us to have forgotten each other," she said, answering his welcome, by giving him her slender hand. "That month on Lake Geneva would be hard to forget."

It was nothing more than a graceful, idle, girlish speech; but the translucent eyes, and the patrician face made it worth the remembering. Gwendoline Framley belonged to this world of

his, which he feared so much, and probably, the first sound of her clear, musical, thorough-bred voice, sealed the fate of the rector's daughter.

He did not call at the Renfrews' again that week. As Lady Strathspey had expected, Gwendoline Framley filled his time, and, in a certain graceful fashion, held him at her side. Time did not hang so heavily at the Coombe, after her arrival, he found. A morning spent in the great parlor, with the windows thrown open, the breeze from the sea coming over the hills fresh with an added scent of heather, and the fair face bending over some pretty work, as he read aloud, was not so wearing after all. Gwendoline was possessed of the wonderful gift of listening well—possibly it had been a part of her young ladylike training; but however that was, she had certainly acquired the art to perfection. She never spoke at the wrong time, never made remarks unadvisedly, always looked interested, never indifferent. Her interest was a graceful, well-trained, well-culti

vated interest, and even when assumed, as in the course of her experience had frequently been unavoidable, it had never betrayed itself. Since she had been "out" she had listened to men who had bored her, and men who bored themselves; but she had always listened well: and now that she had encountered a man who was in no danger of proving tedious, she was naturally very charming. Strathspey found her so in more ways than one. Even the perfect, elaborate toilets, which appeared so adaptedly at all times, with their flower-like freshness, were an additional charm to him. Prue had pleased and amused him. Gwendoline ruled him with her conscious, in-born self-possession; and when such a man is so ruled, by such a woman, his fate is sealed for him. There was no fear of the world's opinion in this case. Gwendoline Framley had held her place from her childhood among the very people whom he feared. She had been the most popular belle of her season, and the men who would have snarled at the

romance of a marriage with his rector's daughter, would envy him, almost savagely, if he won her for his wife. He was less a hero than anything else, I believe I have said already; and so, letting all these things drift before him idly, he forgot his uncomfortable sense of having done a wrong, and remained at the Coombe, playing the pleasant *rôle* of cavalier to his mother's guest, while Prue waited patiently for his coming, and her patient waiting was in vain.

She had heard of the arrival of the expected guest, and made it his excuse. Lady Strathspey would wish him to remain with them, she told herself, and it was but right that he should remain; but still she could not restrain a soft little sigh, at the remembrance of the quietly happy days, when there had been no one to come between them.

She was half afraid, when Sunday morning arrived, at the prospect of meeting this beautiful new comer, and she dressed herself with no small

amount of trepidation. The Strathspey pew was not filled when she entered the church; but it was not long before the party from the Coombe made their appearance, and the quiet little figure in the square pew near the pulpit was the first object which met Gwendoline Framley's glance. Prue looked up, and saw her as she followed Lady Strathspey up the aisle, and her first glance at the fair, reposeful face, and translucent eyes, struck her with a sudden, strange pang, so unlike her usual quiet, that she was almost frightened at it.

The sweet voice was not so clearly ready with the responses this morning, and the sweet face was not so bright. A faint presageful shadow had fallen upon it. She looked across the church at the beautiful figure, in its rich, elaborate dress, and her heart fell — the gulf which lay between their two girlish loves was so wide a one.

She passed out of the little stone porch, just as Strathspey handed his mother's guest into

their carriage, and perhaps her first doubt came upon her at that moment. There was something of scarcely to be defined admiration in his eyes, as the girl smiled her grateful thanks — a something Prue had never seen before, and the faint presageful shadow grew deeper, and fell upon her sadly as she turned away.

CHAPTER VII.

A PLAIN TALK.

THE quiet young figure of the rector's daughter stood at the rectory parlor-window, with folded hands, the quiet, young face looking out steadily at the hills, fast growing dusky purple in the deepening twilight.

It was not the face which had smiled up at Lord Strathspey, on the Brae, a few months before. There was a slight pallor upon it, the sweet, serious mouth had a listless droop, the brown eyes were strained and sad, the fresh untried look was gone.

It was only two months since Strathspey had left her standing in the moonlight, with his kisses on her lips, and yet, in these two short months, the curtain had swung slowly upward, and the old, helpless, worn-out tragedy which has been

played so often and so cruelly, was beginning to act itself out once more.

There was nothing novel or dramatic in her dawning sorrow. It was only a helpless, vague one — only the skeleton of a plot, without any stage accompaniments to make it startling. It had made no change in her life as yet; there were the same things to be done, and she did them as conscientiously as ever; the same quiet, domestic duties to be performed, and not one of them were neglected; but her contentment in their management was gone. She went about the house with the same gentle attention to the every-day wants, but oftentimes Marjory looked up from her work to see her standing silent and dreamy, faint little lines showing themselves on her white forehead, and her brown eyes fixed far away.

“I don’t think I am very well, Marjory,” she had said once or twice; but she had never acknowledged, even to herself, that there was any cause for the change which had come over her.

She had waited, with trustful patience, at first, not understanding its being possible, that what had seemed the realization of her happiness could be a mockery. She could not believe it in her ignorance, and no shadow of the truth crossed her mind. She had seen Strathspey once or twice since Gwendoline Framley had come to the Coombe; but their short meetings had only left her bewildered, stricken, and wondering. He had called at the rectory, if the truth must be told, in the hopes of stifling an occasional twinge of conscience; but, not finding the visits satisfactory, they became fewer and farther between, and in the end, dropped almost entirely. "It must come to an end sometime," he told himself, with a slight recurrence of the sense of discomfort, "and why not now, when there was a not too palpable apology." Every day, with the help of his new enchantment, led him farther away from the memory of the kisses he had stolen from the pure, girlish lips, in the moonlight; and

with such a man, the fading of the strongest impression life can leave, is only a question of time. Perhaps she had thought as lightly of them as he had, he tried to persuade himself, and with constant repetition, the argument became sufficiently plausible to be almost believed. "Almost," I say, not quite. So weeks passed, and Prue saw nothing of him, unless with his mother and Gwendoline Framley at church, or driving through the village, and day by day found her awakening to a new dread. She had never dreamed until now that it was very possible that the kisses and tender words had held no meaning, but that the time had passed slowly with him, and that her ignorance and trust had helped it onward. She had made every excuse for his absence which faith could suggest; she had even tried to believe in the old palliation, that it was right that his mother's guest should occupy his time and attention; but now a new feeling was dawning upon her, which as yet she was unable to grasp in all its magnitude.

She was pondering over it, as she waited for her father, this evening. He had gone to the Coombe, a few hours before, at Lady Strathspey's request, on a matter of business, and now Prue was waiting for his return, with an expectation which was almost pain. She scarcely knew why she expected him so eagerly. He knew nothing of her trouble, she fancied, and could tell her nothing; but the fact that he had perhaps heard the careless indolent voice, and seen the careless face, was enough to thrill her from head to foot.

She waited so eagerly, and with so much of vague anticipation, that when at last the door opened, and her father entered, the face she turned toward him was almost feverish in its expectant anxiety.

"I thought you were never coming," she said, with a little flutter in her voice. "Tea has been waiting for an hour, papa."

She was at his side in a moment, ready with the slippers and dressing-gown, with which she

never failed. She helped him to put them on as usual, and drew his easy-chair to the fire ; but her hand trembled a little as she assisted him to remove his coat, and there was a hot spot of color on her cheek, as she took her place behind the tea-service.

There was never any alteration in her affectionate manner toward him, and she never forgot one thing which might add to his comfort ; it would not have been like her to let her trouble reveal itself ; but still, in these days, there was a faint, sad feeling of restraint between them. Perhaps it had arisen from their mutual desire to ignore the truth, or perhaps, from their mutual pain ; but it was there nevertheless, and in spite of their endeavors to conceal it, ruled them. The innocent childhood was a thing of the past, at least, and each felt it to be so.

The deep lines on the rector's face were deeper this evening than they had ever been, and his grave, resolute mouth had a sadder gravity.

Lady Strathspey was a thorough diplomatist, woman as she was, and had known very well what she was saying, when she made her visitor partly her confidant on the subject which was nearest to her heart.

“Coombe-Ashley will scarcely be neglected again, I fancy,” she had carelessly said. “If Angus is married, as soon as I hope he will be, I have no doubt he will make it his home, and then of course he will feel his responsibilities.”

Her confidence had merely appeared accidental; but it had been sufficiently well arranged, and had at least conveyed the information she intended it should, namely, that her desires were likely to consummated.

The rector thought over it, as he drank his tea, and glanced at the slight figure before him. He knew enough of the world to understand what her ladyship’s speech had meant, and he was thinking of what it might mean to his daughter.

Prue sat at the head of the table, with the spot

of color burning on either cheek, and an eager shadow in her eyes. She could not ask him anything. What could she ask? So she waited, with a feverish pain, to hear if he would speak of what he had seen. But when the meal had ended, and he had said nothing, her restlessness grew too much for her.

She went out to Marjory in the kitchen, and gave her orders for the night, and then lingered for a few minutes, half fearing to return to the room. She did not know, poor child, that he feared to see her come.

She went back to the parlor at last, and found her father sitting there in silence, and almost darkness. He had taken his summer seat in the deep old mullioned window, and was watching in the shadowy darkness for the rising of the moon. She went and stood near him, looking out for a few moments in silence, but at last she spoke to him.

“Did you see Miss Framley, papa?” she asked.

She did not look at him as she spoke, and the little flutter in her voice made it sound strangely low and unsteady; so low and unsteady that it gave her hearer a dull pang.

“Yes,” he answered, “and Strathspey, too, Prue.”

Her heart beat heavily. It always did beat at the sound of that name; but now its echo forced it to a stronger throb.

In the pause that followed the rector pondered gravely. If she was clinging to any hope, she must be undeceived, and who but himself could undeceive her. She was too young to feel the pain long, after the first wrench was over; but it had been her first young dream, and the pang must be a strong one which tore it from her. He did not understand that, young as she was, this quiet girlish romance of hers might be as hard to kill as the romance of a woman. He pitied her; but he pitied her as the innocent child he had loved, whose childhood was now lost to her. He

had not awakened to the full truth yet. "Poor little bairn," he said to himself, and then glanced upward at the slight figure in the shadow, with its face to the window.

"She is a very beautiful girl, this Miss Fram-ey, Prue," he said, at last.

"Yes, papa," she answered, without moving.

"Lady Strathspey was telling me to-night," he went on steadily, "that she had hopes that she would hold his lordship at Coombe-Ashley. I have no doubt she will, when they are married, as I think they will be."

The slender figure stirred faintly, but very faintly, and then Prue made her reply.

"It will be better for Coombe-Ashley," she said, slowly.

He had not anticipated that she would display any great emotion, but he had expected to see more than this. It almost relieved him, and his fancy that her youth would make her pain lighter for her, returned to him with more of

reassurance than it had offered before, and made him speak more cheerfully.

"Yes," he said. "It will be better for Coombe-Ashley, and better for all of us. Miss Framley is a very fitting Lady Strathspey."

Prue made no reply. She stood silently watching the clouds brighten above the hill-tops as the moon rose. She was thinking steadily of the one thing.

The rector rose from his seat at last. It would be best to leave her alone, he thought.

"I have some work to do," he said to her, "so I must go to my room. Good-night, Prue."

"Good-night, papa," she answered, steadily, and then he left her.

She did not stir after he was gone, and she found herself alone. The moon was just flooding the rowan-trees with its shining light, and she watched it movelessly, and in silence.

Men had amused themselves with women often before, as women had amused themselves with

men; other women had awakèned from foolish, tender, delicious dreams of happiness; but few women had ever awakened with such a shock, leaving behind in the past so much of innocent faith and ignorant trust as this poor, little, desolate Prue. Until the morning she had met Gwendoline Framley in church, she had never dreamed that the wide difference between herself and her lover could be an obstacle; she had thought of nothing but her love, and this love had been so girlish, so foolish, so trusting, so pure. She saw it all now. She had been led on blindly to this end, while he—she stopped here, remembering the handsome, careless face, and the eyes which had smiled her down. Her heart began to beat wildly; it was only a girl's heart, and the handsome face and smiling eyes had won it from the first. She could not blame him yet—a woman might have done so, a girl never. I almost think that if it had been possible to blot out all the remembrance, with all its present and

future pain, she would have chosen to keep the memory, rather than stand where she had stood twelve months before, losing the recollection of the blonde, cavalier face, and the great thrills of foolish bliss it had brought her. There were so many memories. There, upon the hearth, he had kissed her hand the night she wore the white fuchsias in her hair; here, at this window, she had waited a hundred times, only to see him pass by with his gun slung over his shoulder; the box of mignonette still bloomed upon the sill; the faded, little brown sprig lay between the leaves of her Bible up stairs, and this moment she felt the touch of the great golden mustache upon her lips, and heard his footfall ring upon the walk as he passed out in the moonlight. Would he never come back again? Perhaps not. She found herself imagining blindly how the old life would seem when she returned to it, and looking forward, with a great shuddering pang, to the time when Miss Framley would come to the Coombe as

Lady Strathspey, and sit in the velvet-hassocked pew, week after week. She could go no farther than that, without the wild heart-beating, and she slipped upon her knees before the empty basket-chair, flinging up her arms—she was so crushed, so stricken.

The shadow of the trouble had been upon her so long, with its constant torture of changing hopes and fears, that she was too weak to bear it. Now it was becoming more than a shadow, and she felt her strength drifting away from her, so she knelt. The helpless, hopeless wearing had been too much for her.

She rose at last. It would not do to remain there any longer, she told herself, and she must go to her room. She had heard Marjory moving about in the kitchen for an hour, making preparations for retiring, and she went out to her, as she always did, to bid her good-night.

But at the kitchen door she paused, strangely

dazzled by the light, and Marjory looked up at her to see her wavering, with white lips.

“Don’t call papa, Marjory,” she said, helplessly. “Please don’t call papa;” and the next instant Marjory had caught her as she fell.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIDING HER TIME.

LADY STRATHSPEY sat in one of the parlors of the Coombe with a faint shadow of anxiety on her handsome, well-preserved features. She had just returned from church with her son and their visitor, and she was pondering, one might have fancied from her expression, upon a subject which caused her some misgivings. She was a worldly woman, this Lady Strathspey, but at her coldest and worldliest, she was never a hard-hearted one; and for the last few weeks something of distrust had been creeping over her before perfect contentment. It was a shade deeper than usual this morning, and it showed itself in her handsome eyes, and in her handsome Strathspey face, with its patrician Saxon features, and at last it reached the surface.

“Did you notice little Miss Renfrew this morning, Gwendoline?” she asked.

Gwendoline was interested at once. She always did notice little Miss Renfrew, and had always noticed her from the first; the brown-eyed face of the rector’s daughter had touched her heart the morning she had caught sight of it under the plain little straw hat in the square pew, and she had a girlish sympathy for it.

“Yes,” she answered. “How pale she was, Lady Strathspey. She looked positively ill, I thought, poor little creature.”

“She looked *very* ill,” said her ladyship, decidedly, the shadow deepening upon her countenance. “I must go and see her.”

She had been watching the rector’s daughter keenly during the last month or so, and the result of her scrutiny was not very satisfactory. Naturally, she had told herself, the girlish face would lose something of its brightness under the dispelling of this first romance. She had seen girls

grow pale before now, when an unpractical fancy had been overruled by wiser and more matronly heads; but in her experience the fancy had always died away in no great length of time, and in the end its death had come to be regarded as a natural and fortunate result. But here was something new — something new enough to trouble her. The shadowy sadness in the girl's face was deeper than she cared to see; and there was nothing of the atmosphere of girlish sentiment about it which, in most cases, with its slight tinge of love-lorn ludicrousness, generally counteracts the outsider's natural sympathy. In their drives they often met her carrying the little basket and the well-worn Bible which her pensioners knew so well; and she always returned their greeting with the sweet gravity which was naturally her own; but the faint pallor was a faint one no longer, and the slender figure looked a thought more slender; and as the summer advanced, Lady Strathspey found herself feeling strangely anxious.

She was not a hard-hearted woman, as I have said, in spite of her very natural weaknesses, and Prue had always possessed a great attraction for her. She had liked her simple, innocent ways, and had warmly admired the unfailing sweetness which made the girl such a favorite with the poorer class. Her childlike faithfulness to her duty had touched her ladyship's heart, and her constant care and affection for her father had often drawn a sigh from her in its contrast with her own idol's amiable indifference. In fact, she had come as near cherishing a sort of well-trained affection for her as was in accordance with her nature.

This morning she had been almost startled, the face under the little straw hat had looked so worn, and, contrasted with the great dark eyes, so strange in its pure pallor. Was it possible that the consequences of her discreet diplomacy were to be more serious than she had imagined? Of course, she could not have acted otherwise

than she had done under the circumstances, but she did not like to encounter such a probability.

Accordingly, the next day found her full of her resolution of paying a visit to the Rectory.

"If there is really as much harm done as I can't help fearing," she said to herself as she entered the carriage, "I may possibly repair it somewhat by sending Angus away. Girls always forget in time, and absence will work wonders."

She did not find either Prue or the rector at home, but as there was some probability that their absence would not be a long one, she decided to wait a short time. Marjory was there at least, and might possibly serve her purpose even better than any one else, and in some sort she did.

But Marjory was not fond of Lady Strathspey at the best of times, and she was less partial to her than ever in these days. She was quick enough, in her Scotch shrewdness, to understand that the delicate immaculately-gloved hand,

which rested on the table as her visitor talked to her, had not been wholly idle in the final turn of the game, and the knowledge did not detract from her naturally uncompromising manner. She had watched every new shade of pallor on the pretty, quiet face she had held against her faithful bosom in its babyhood; she had understood the dreamy listlessness which had settled upon it, and she had understood, also what its beginning had been, and where its end would drift to. So she did not prove very sparing, as she thought over the matter, and replied to her visitor's well-bred sympathetic questions.

"I was sorry to see that your young mistress did not look very well yesterday, Marjory," her ladyship said, at length.

"She was na weel, my leddy," answered Marjory, unbendingly. "I canna say she often is weel now, puir young thing!"

"I hope it is nothing serious," said Lady Strathspey. "I should be sorry to believe that.

Miss Renfrew is a dear little thing, and we cannot afford to lose her."

"Her father canna afford to lose her, my leddy," Marjory replied, with an uncompromising face; "but if she dinna mend, I'm e'en of the mind he will. Her mither lies in the kirk-yard. She was na much aulder than Prue, an' she was happy wi' the man she luv'd. There's a taint o' consumption in the Renfrew bluid, your leddyship, and sorrow aye helps it to its work."

The immaculately-gloved hand was drawn from the table with a slight start.

"You surely do not mean it is so bad as that," her ladyship exclaimed.

"I mean naething else," returned Marjory, sternly. "Prue Renfrew's heart is broken, your leddyship, and Angus, Laird Strathspey, has broken it. I'm but a puir body, but I speak my mind in that."

There was no use in diplomacy now. This

straight-forward strong Scotchwoman, a hireling as she was, had gone to the point at once, and her ladyship was fain to follow. She had not intended doing so, it is true, but she was a sensible woman, her pride to the contrary, and since her difficulty had faced her, she met it in a matter-of-fact way.

She waved her gloved hand to Margery with quiet decision.

"Sit down," she said, practically. "I am anxious to talk to you about that. I have feared this before."

"I can stan' as weel, my leddy," was the good woman's dry reply; so her visitor was obliged to pursue her conversation, looking up at the square figure and square face as her listener stood before her.

"I have feared this," she said again. "I have feared it from the first, and I tried to prevent it. How long has it been going on?"

"From the first week that Lord Strathspey came to Coombe-Ashley," grimly. "He wasted no time."

"And you think that this is the cause of your young lady's illness?"

"I did na say I thought it was."

"You are sure, then," said Lady Strathspey, a trifle impatiently. "I regret to hear it—extremely; but I hope you are mistaken in supposing the consequences to be so serious. It is very natural you should be anxious. I am anxious myself. My son has acted imprudently, of course; but men are not apt to be cautious. I only see one way out of the difficulty. He has thought of returning to London with Miss Framley—and I dare say that it is best that he should do so. I shall certainly encourage the idea, and after that we can only hope for the best. Miss Penfrew is very young, and I have no doubt she will get over it." (Observe, my readers, that

her ladyship was not exempt from the popular belief that grief may be got over.)

Still, in spite of this belief, her face was not quite clear when her call had ended, and the footman closed her carriage-door upon her. 'Th square, uncompromising form and dry voice had shaken her self-possession somewhat, though she did not deign to acknowledge it.

She sent for her son shortly after reaching the Coombe, and he came to her morning-room to find her standing by the low marble mantel-piece resting a full, shapely arm upon it, and looking both disturbed and annoyed.

To tell the truth, her ladyship had had a love affair herself a score of years ago or so — a very romantic love affair, with a handsome, empty pocketed, titleless “detrimental,” who, but for discreet maternal interposition, might have carried the day; and, though this love affair ended as most of such romances do, she had still

collection of its ephemeral sadness, which softened her heart toward this girl, who was undergoing a like experience.

She turned her head slightly as Strathspey came in, and motioned him to a chair.

"I want to talk to you, Angus," she said, sit down, if you please.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRUTH IS TOLD.

HE threw himself in a chair, carelessly, in his usual indolent, yet graceful, fashion. It was characteristic of the man that he could not look ungraceful.

"Gwendoline is alone," he said, half smiling. "You will excuse me for mentioning it."

But her ladyship did not smile.

"I want to speak seriously to you," she began. "I am rather anxious this morning—I have been to the Rectory."

He looked up, coloring a little.

"I—don't understand you," he said, a trifle confusedly.

"I ask pardon for contradicting you, Angus," said her ladyship, drily, "but I think you do. There is no need for attempting to ignore the

natter now. It has gone too far. You have done an absurd thing, and its consequences are more serious than you anticipated."

His color deepened almost to scarlet.

"Is that what your visit to the Rectory has taught you?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "I have been watching the affair for weeks, and this morning I went to the Rectory to inquire into it, as well as I could. No one was at home but the old servant, — rather a presuming old creature, by the way, faithful as she is, — and I discovered that my fears were not groundless. The girl's health is suffering. Of course, it is out of the question to suppose that you could have married her, Angus — and you were fully cognizant of it. Why did you not take my advice? She was a good little thing, and contented and happy enough before."

His thoughts went back to the innocent brown eyes, which had been upraised to his that first morning on the hill-side, and he flung himself

from his seat, and came to the mantel with a gloomy expression.

“If it were not for Gwendoline, I would marry her now,” he said, half savagely. “I have made a rascal of myself, I admit, but I was bored into it. Confound Coombe-Ashley!”

“If it were not for Gwendoline you would do no such thing,” said his mother, with a clear decisiveness. “There is one thing you can do, however. You can go away. I am sorry for the girl, and I blame you strongly. If a woman had committed herself in the manner you have done, the whole world would have been up in arms at her reckless folly. I don’t want any scandal to arise; and I think it would be better for all parties concerned, if you returned to London with Gwendoline. Girls outlive these sort of things; and I have no doubt this one will overcome herself in time.”

It was an easy way out of a difficulty certainly, and not an unpleasant one. Even Coombe-Ash-

ley had been rendered bearable with Gwendoline Framley's assistance, and surely London would be worth the trying at her side. She had overruled his fickle fancy for the rector's daughter; she had, now and then, almost overruled his remembrance of her; so he found it not so difficult a matter to persuade himself that his mother was right in saying that Prue would live her girlish trouble down. Besides, he was in earnest now, and was desirous of having his fate decided.

"I am ready to go as soon as Gwendoline is," he said. "If I have been a fool, I am sorry for it."

"So am I," returned Lady Strathspey, concisely. "Gwendoline returns next week, and though decency will compel you to pay a farewell visit to the Rectory, I trust you will not be guilty of any greater indiscretion. I wish to heaven, Angus," with a sudden touch of woman's passion in her voice which startled him, "I wish to

heaven your foolishness had been more honorable and less cruel."

He made no reply — he had nothing to say ; so he only lingered for a few minutes, and then returned to the dining-room, and there, for the time, the matter rested. But, wisely as her ladyship had disposed of it, it is quite likely that she had not overrated its seriousness, on the contrary, she had somewhat underrated it.

From the night when Prue had fainted at the kitchen-door a change had been slowly creeping over her. She thought at first that it would not be easy to go back to the quiet she had left in the past ; but, in the course of time, experience taught her that it was impossible. The simple contentment which had made her happiness was lost forever. The freshness was gone, the untried peace was gone. The days which had been scarcely long enough to contain her tender dreams, now the dreams had fallen into ashes, grew weary and intolerable. If she had known

more of the world, if she had been less ignorant of sorrow, the blow she had received would not have been such a heavy one; but, waking suddenly to the reality, she was strangely helpless, and a blight fell upon her which she could not overcome. There was not an atom of weak sentiment about it, and her hidden trouble only showed itself in the new, soft pallor, and an added quietness in her life; but in spite of herself its shadow grew upon her every day.

Her poor pensioners upon the hill-sides and in the village began to wonder in the something they had lost in the fresh voice and sweet smile; and some of the more observing began to whisper among themselves their kindly sorrow for her. The little basket was not so easy to carry, she found at last; and the rough, sturdy, bare-legged "bairns" fell into the habit of carrying it for her, trotting along at her side silently, and yet in all the intensity of their wild shyness, casting wistful glances at her quiet, white, young face.

But no one knew the truth so well as Marjory. In her first sudden weakness Prue had rested in the strong arms, and let her faithful old friend guess at her story without any effort at concealment.

“I knew so little,” she faltered out in the end; “and I thought he loved me. I scarcely know why — he never said so; but once he — he kissed me. It wasn’t his fault, Marjory,” with weary quietness. “How could he love me? It was mine, because I was weak and foolish, and knew so little.”

It seemed to be her greatest fear that her father would learn how heavy her trouble really was, and she strove against it day after day, in her efforts to conceal it from him. She tried to hide the listlessness which had come upon her; and she tried to counterfeit her former cheerful girlishness and content; but even he would waken from his reveries now and then, or look up from his work to see what Marjory saw so often, the

faint lines on the white forehead, and the tired brown eyes fixed far away. He tried to convince himself at first that it would wear away in time, and held his fears within his own bosom, forbearing to speak of them ; but at last the change in her was so great that it forced itself upon him with a foreboding as new as terrible.

But good, stern old Marjory had not been deceived from the beginning. She watched the girl from morning until night. She saw as no one else did, the slender little figure growing more slender, and the slight young hands slighter, even though the change was an almost imperceptible one. The tragedy, quiet as it was, had been a tragedy to her honest heart from its first scene, and the dread which had fallen upon her master had grown upon her hourly, with a sorrowful fresh recollection of how she had watched her nurseling's fair young mother fade away from them like a broken flower.

And in the meantime, at the Coombe, as far as

mere plans may be regarded, Lady Strathspey's plan prospered. Certainly her son threw no obstacles in their way. He was getting tired of Coombe-Ashley, and besides, was not so comfortable there as he had been, for now and then a whisper of the wrong he had wrought came to him. Of course, outsiders did not understand that he had been to blame, but they discussed the matter, notwithstanding. It was "the taint o' consumption in the Renfrew bluid," Prue's friends said, sadly; and in their mourning over it, in their poor homes, it became the common talk that "the puir, bonny young thing was following her mither!"

It was not easy to realize, and Strathspey did not realize it, but it troubled him vaguely, nevertheless. He had never missed seeing the slight figure in the rectory-pew, and though the change which had come over the face beneath the plain little straw hat had startled him once or twice, he had still a belief in his mother's doctrine, that

she would "get over it." Still he was not sorry when the time drew near for his departure ; it would be better of course, and more agreeable.

He rather dreaded the farewell call, however. He was like many other men, in his fear of awkward situations — and decidedly this was a somewhat awkward one. If it had been avoidable, it certainly would have been avoided ; but since it was not, it was necessary to face it with as good a grace as possible.

He was not sorry to find the rector absent when he made his visit — possibly the absence was somewhat of a relief to him.

There were many men with whom he would not have been reluctant to have exchanged places as he waited in the old-fashioned, many-cornered parlor for Prue's coming. So thoroughly impressive was he, and so utterly controlled by circumstances, that I think, if it had not been for Gwendoline Framley, he might have been overruled even then — but it would only have been by the force of circumstances after all.

CHAPTER X.

CAN IT BE?

BUT Prue came at last, and his first glance at her almost shocked him, the change which had slowly crept upon her was really so great a one. He had not known its full extent before, and he was startled by the slenderness of the hand she offered him, and by the pure, colorless look of her face.

Was it possible that she would not "get over it," after all? Careless as he was, he could not control a swift pang of remorseful fear at the thought. She knew why he had come. She had heard the rumor of his intended departure, and she understood that this was to be the end of her dream. Her pulse was fluttering wildly, and the blood at her heart beat with a heavy throb; but she was not an ignorant girl now, her experience

had forced her into womanhood, and she had learned at length to see what the graceful, idle game had meant. He had done her the bitterest wrong a man can do a woman, and he was trying to ignore it. But it was not so easily ignored. Remembering the past, it was somewhat difficult to appear at ease, though he made an effort at it.

He had come to bid her a hurried good-bye, he told her, after the first commonplace had been spoken. Circumstances had rendered it necessary that he should leave Coombe-Ashley, and of course, he could not go without making his adieux to herself and Mr. Renfrew. He was anxious to get it over, and tried to speak easily; but he could not help being conscious that his attempt was a failure, and he could not resist the sense of discomfort which overpowered him. How would she take it.

She met it very quietly. The sharp sting of the blow had passed away, and only the dull,

dead bruise remained, and there was something like a touch of simple dignity in her girlish manner. The shadow of dawning womanhood in her still sad eyes would not have been a pleasant thing for the least impressible of men to have upon his conscience. In some way it touched this man's shallow soul, in its contrast with the old untried freshness which had charmed him so, and it needed a greater effort than ever to utter graceful commonplaces with the slender figure standing quietly before him, and the quiet young face a little averted from his gaze.

His visit had been a very pleasant one, he said to her again, but he was a little tired of rustication, and was unlike herself, in the respect of being necessary to Coombe-Ashley's happiness.

He did not remain very long, and said but little more—he had little more to say. He could not overcome the awkwardness of his position, and he found it becoming more awkward every moment.

He left Coombe-Ashley in her care, he added, finally, trying to speak lightly; he was sure it was in good hands, and he thanked her for the assistance she had rendered him. But it was a wretched mockery of ease, so wretched a one that he bade her good-bye with an intense feeling of relief, and she — well, she saw him leave the room with a consciousness that she could not have borne the ordeal longer.

She stood at the window, and watched him down the road when he had left her — and her watching had a strange, dead despair in it. It was hard to believe that he was gone at last — gone so calmly and so carelessly. She scarcely realized until now that she had looked forward to this farewell with an undefined fancy that there would be something terrible in it, that it could not pass over with the dull quiet which had grown upon her. It seemed that a great passionate pang would almost have been a relief after this slow, helpless death of her happiness,

the dull dying out of all hope. Ah! my reader, these quiet, commonplace tragedies are the constant dropping which wears away the stone. But it was gone, and it was over, and the bruise was more dangerous than a stab would have been, for its dullness was the sick pain which means death.

She slipped into her old favorite seat almost unconsciously, and sat there looking out at the sunshine in a moveless silence, and when her father returned, he found her sitting there still, though the sun had gone down, and evening was setting in. Marjory had opened the door for him, and in her quaint bitterness had told him of the visit.

“He has been, master—this braw Strathspey,” she had said. “He came to bid her gude-by, and she has been sitting her’ ’lane ever sin’.”

He went to her with a heavy heart, and when he came to her side, she looked up, and their eyes met in a swift, saddened understanding.

There was a little silence, in which he laid his hand upon her hair, as he always did, with that pitying, caressing touch, and then he spoke to her.

"He has gone, Prue?" he questioned in a low voice.

"Yes," she answered.

"And it is all over?"

"Yes."

He touched the brown hair even more tenderly than before, she was so dear to him in her girlish trouble.

"We will try to forget it together, my bairn," he said. "We were very happy in the old life — you and I; and we will try to be happy again."

Prue looked out into the darkening garden with a slow heart-throb. Were they really going back? Could she ever go back to the old peace? The answer did not come to her clearly, though a shadow of it passed through her mind with a remembrance that it was a shadow not entirely new.

She did not speak of it then, but it was upon her, nevertheless, it had been upon her before ; and as the days passed on, its shadow grew deeper, and she began to recognize it more clearly.

When Strathspey was gone, their lives slipped back into the old groove. The rector returned to his labors with a feeling of relief, Prue to her quiet work ; and Lady Strathspey began to congratulate herself that her charitable plan had been a success. This little Miss Renfrew would forget her fancy, as other girls had done.

But perhaps she did not quite understand the matter rightly. The girls who had "got over it" had not been made of the same material as Prue Renfrew, and their lives had held more of excitement to distract their attention from their grief. Prue stood alone. She had wondered, and dreamed, and faltered, and now the end had come, and there was nothing else left to her. This brief, sweet love-story, which to other

women would have seemed so trifling, had revealed to her ignorance a world of delicious happiness. There was nothing more to dream of, nothing to believe in, nothing to trust. Often at night, she wakened, wondering strangely what the coming day would bring, or if each day would pass on as the last had done, until her life was ended. Once or twice she had found herself flinging up her hands in the darkness, and panting in a wild, sudden tremor of pain and terror at the dull apathy which was creeping over her. Marjory looked up now oftener than ever to see her darling dreamily silent, with the faint lines on her forehead, and the shadow in her eyes. She awakened from such reveries, generally, with a start, and then the quiet listlessness came upon her again. But once she did not awaken, and when Marjory touched her, she slipped into her arms, still and white, just as she had slipped into her arms the night when her tragedy had first dawned upon her fully, and when she returned

to consciousness again, the secret she had hidden in her girlish breast so long, revealed itself for the first time.

“Marjory,” she whispered, clinging to the broad shoulder, “Marjory, I think I am going to die.”

She had never spoken so before ; she had never let them dream that she felt her quiet sorrow could lead to such an end ; but Marjory had known it, and now the good old creature broke down utterly.

“For the gude Lord’s sake, Miss Prue,” she cried, “dinna say that, bairn ! For the gude Lord’s sake, think o’ your father !”

But she had thought of her father often enough, with a sad wonder as to who would take her place, if such an ending really came. The shadow had become more than a shadow, and she had begun to feel that this end was coming, however slowly, and had looked forward to it with a listless recognizance of its reality, but she had never mentioned it before.

The two months that followed were a terrible two months to Marjory, and as the new consciousness grew more strongly upon him, they were a terrible two months to her master, too. His pretty, brown-eyed Prue — this “one ewe lamb!”

It could not be. He battled against her fears with all his stern strength; he tried to ignore it, and then one glance at the slender little hands, with their sadly lighter touch; one look at the fair pure face, and his courage would fail him. Before the summer had ended the quiet, slight figure was often absent from the square pew, and he was learning to understand that the girlish romance was proving itself a tragedy in truth. Even her pensioners had begun to miss her, and in the end Marjory came to her master, one morning, and poured forth her long silent grief.

She had just left Prue lying, as she often did of late, upon a lounge in the parlor, and her last glimpse of the pale face, with its half-closed eyes, had been too much for her.

“She is dying, master,” she cried, with sad brevity. “I canna let your een be linger shut. She was but a bairn after a’, and her heart is e’n broken, and neither you nor I can save her.”

He rose from his place a stricken man. He did not speak. He went to the room where the girl lay, and there the full force of the truth burst upon him, crushing every hope he had cherished.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAGEDY ENDS.

HE knelt at her side, and took her hand in his, stricken to the heart by his recognition of how frail it had grown; and when he did so she opened her eyes and looked up at him.

“Prue,” he faltered. “My bairn, what is this?”

She knew what he meant, but her old fear for his pain seemed to be lost in something deeper and more solemn.

“Don’t you understand?” she whispered, with a strange flutter in her voice. “I am going to die.”

He gave one look at the brown, shadowy eyes, and then the full sense of the loss which would be his opened to him.

“I cannot believe it, Prue,” he cried. “I cannot believe it!”

“It is true,” she said, with great weariness, scarcely as though she had heard him. “It was true from the first. You did not quite understand it, you know; but it was true.”

It was useless to tell him that now, for he could read the truth for himself. The face which lay upon the cushion was the face of her dying mother—he knew the look too well; but she had not faded and died with a blight on her young life.

Now, my reader, I dare say I shall surprise you, perhaps, if you are practical persons, which is very likely, and excite your practical contempt, when I tell you that this girl, with her quiet little sentimental, every-day tragedy, did die, in truth, —died quietly, but sadly enough, perhaps, in the eyes of unpractical people, of what we sometimes hear called a broken heart. A common-place cause for such an uncommon-place death, you think; but the love of this Scottish rector’s ignorant young daughter had been her life —and her

love was dead ; and perhaps such deaths are not so uncommon as we fancy. Perhaps the unromantic hearts, whose unromantic beatings are sometimes stilled—the homely hearts of homely men and women—are oftener stilled by some quiet tragedy, than we, who know so much in our great and practical reason, would ever dream of.

But however that is, I must end my tragedy as it ended on the stage of the quiet life.

Prue Renfrew died—died because her young life was blighted ; and being only a girl, since it seemed to her girlish weakness that life's burden was too hard to bear, she laid it down. This is one view of the case ; but there is another—that He who is pitiful to all, laid His great hand upon the girlish heart, and lightened the burden with a touch.

Only a few weeks more and, one morning, Lady Strathspey's carriage stopped at the Rectory garden-gate, and her ladyship stepped out, with a deeper anxiousness on her pale, handsome face • than had ever softened its haughtiness before.

Marjory opened the door for her, as usual ; but there was something softened even in Marjory's stern, tear-stained face, as she led the way to the little white bed-room, up stairs, now darkened by closed blinds, and faintly sweet with the odor of flowers.

The rector stood at the bedside, looking down at the fair young face upon the pillow, and after her first startled glance at this young face, her ladyship turned to him.

"I did not dream of this!" she said. "I never dreamed of this! She is dying!"

He touched the strengthless little hand upon the coverlet, and bowed his head with the broken majesty of a stricken man.

"My 'one ewe lamb,' my lady," he said; "and she is dying."

The woman could not speak. If she had not murdered this girl, she had at least helped her to her death in spite of her tardy caution, and in the first passion of her womanly pity, I think it

possible that she saw her idol as she had never seen him before.

She went home and wrote him a passionate, earnest letter, full of a remorse which struck him to the soul when it reached him. In her recognition of what his trifling and her own worldliness had done, she could not be bitter and passionate enough. It might be that circumstances ruled her as they ruled her son; it might be that her remorse was a feeling of the moment, and would pass away; but certainly, it ruled her and wrung her bitterly in this hour.

“Return at once,” she wrote in the end. “She may die even before you reach us; and if she should open her dying eyes and ask for you,—the dying often have such fancies, they tell me—and you were not there, Angus, I should *never* forgive you.”

And so he came, pale and wretched, and shaken with such a remorse as such a man can feel; an ephemeral pang enough, but still a pang, and a

keen one. In the moment when at last he stood in the little darkened bedroom, he would have given even the words he had heard Gwendoline Framley speak a few days before, to bring the untried freshness back again, and undo the wrong of his trifling. She had not asked for him, she had scarcely spoken, unless a few tender words to her father, in her sweet, broken voice. Sometimes she seemed quite unconscious, and when he entered, she was lying quietly with the little brown Bible clasped in her hand, she had asked for—in the night, and her father had brought it to her. They were all waiting for the end then, and they knew that it was drawing very near.

To Strathspey it seemed that he had stood silent by the bedside for hours. He had watched the white face upon the pillow until it seemed to have melted away, and left him standing in the darkness.

But at last she moved faintly, and a hush fell

upon them even deeper than before. Her father raised her hand and stood moveless, and the next moment the great, innocent brown eyes opened full and suddenly.

It seemed as if she had lost all of earth but one memory ; it seemed as if she had forgotten all the rest, and this one memory held a strange mysterious power.

The end had come.

She moved a little, just a little, with the faint movement of a wearied child, and then the brown eyes fell upon Strathspey as if he had never left her side.

“You kissed me once, my lord,” she said, slowly, with the soft, strange flutter in her voice. “You kissed me once, and you forgot it ; but I—I could not.” And then the brown eyes darkened suddenly and fell, and then——Ah ! what then ! Only those who have gone before can tell us, for with the closing of her eyes the curtain fell upon the stage again—the tragedy was played to its ending.

The rector bent over gently, there was no tear in his eyes, no tremor on his dark, stern face, and took the little, well-worn Bible from her hand—the little, well-worn Bible they all knew so well—and as he took it, a brown, faded, scentless sprig of mignonette fell from its pages, and fluttered to Strathspey's feet.

They buried her in the old church-yard, close by her mother's side; and the purple heather grew about her, and the bells swung in the old tower, and chimed above. From his pulpit the rector could turn, and looking out of the gothic windows, see the little mound, with its cross of marble at its head. He himself it was who stood, when the grave was open, and read the sublime words over the slender coffin, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and he, turning his steps homeward to the brown, gabled rectory, remembered desolately how the brown-eyed, girlish face had always greeted him. But for the rest. Shall I say that she was remembered

after the first pang was over, and the world had gone back to its accustomed groove? Shall I say that she was forgotten? Nay, keeping before you this man, of whom there are hundreds such, I leave you to answer for yourself.

The curtain has fallen, and my tragedy has ended.

THE TIDE ON THE MOANING BAR.

BY MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOTHER'S REQUEST.

I HAD never liked him. Much as I loved my lady, and long as I had labored in her service, I cannot say that I ever knew the day when I had any affection for Mr. Jack, even the slightest. There was a hard look in his black eyes from the first, and the moment I saw him as he lay, a day-old baby, bundled up in lawns and laces, it seemed as if I saw into his future, and trembled. And as he grew older, the evil spirit grew with him. He was cruel and selfish as a child, though his handsome face covered his faults, as such faces are apt to do; and even my lady,

who was so gentle and kindly, could see no harm in him, thought his willful ways were only high spirit. And perhaps she was the more blind to it, because his black eyes were so like his dead father's; and she had always clung to her husband's memory so tenderly. But Mr. Jack was not like his father, though my lady fancied he was. Mr. Lowther had never made an enemy in his life; and I am sure Mr. Jack never made a true friend. People flattered and feared him, and pretended to admire his beauty and high-handed ways; but no one ever liked him well enough to speak a good word for him behind his back. But for my lady's sake, people bore with him, and for my lady's sake, I bore with him among the rest; and when she lay upon her death-bed, it was me she gave the charge of caring for him, as I had cared for her.

"Don't leave Mr. Jack, Mallon," she said to me when she could not say anything else. "Don't leave my boy. Take care of him, for my sake.

I know he will always take care of you, Mallon. His father would have done it, if he had lived; and I know Jack will."

But though I promised, I knew better than to expect anything like gratitude from Mr. Jack. I had watched him all his life, and never knew him to show a thoroughly unselfish impulse.

But for my sweet, dead lady's sake, I stayed with him as housekeeper, at the Manse, as the country house was called, and I tried my best to please him; so we had no disagreement, for he never interfered, so long as things were to his liking; and I may add, never even thought to give me the thanks his father and my lady had never spared. However, I stayed, and attended to the servants, and kept the house accounts; and when he came down from London with his friends, he never had to complain. And so matters went on, until the month after my lady's death, when he suddenly took a fancy that he wanted me to go with him to a little sea-side town, where he

had been staying for some whim or other ; for, as he condescended to say then, for the first time, he “ liked my ways, and liked to have me about him.” So, remembering my promise to his dying mother, I went, without any words ; though I must admit it was rather a trial, at my time of life, to make such a change all at once ; and, moreover, I could scarcely see how it was that he could require me.

I found his chambers very fine and handsomely furnished ; for it was just like Mr. Jack to have everything of the handsomest and best. There was a large suite of them, in a big house, in the principal square, and the rest of the establishment was let to an Irish officer, whose regiment was quartered in the town-barracks. Major Clangarthe, the gentleman’s name was : and his family, consisting of a wife and three or four children, was with him. His rooms were not so handsome as Mr. Jack’s, I discovered ; and even the best of them had a queer, untidy look. Mrs. Clangarthe

had been a great beauty in her day, and came of a very fine, very poor, Irish family; and on the strength of this, she used to lie on the sofa, or sit in an easy-chair all day, joking with the Major, and letting the children run wild. They had made away with plenty of money in their time, shabby as things seemed now; and they were as carelessly-happy, good-tempered a set as ever I saw in my life. When they had money, it flew right and left, and when they gave their gay little wine-suppers, I am sure people never enjoyed themselves more than they did; and there was never more hearty laughing than I could hear among the officers who crowded into their drawing-rooms, as if they would rather be there than attend the finest entertainment in the West End. But they were queer people, for all that.

The first I saw of them was two or three days after my arrival, when, as I was sitting at my work, there came a rap at my door, and, in answer to my "come in," it opened, and showed me a young lady standing there, laughing.

“Do you mean ‘come in’ really?” she said, good-naturedly. “If you don’t, I can run away again.”

She was a very pretty young lady, indeed, and very young; not more than seventeen; but, to my mind, she looked queer enough. She had big, round, lovely gray eyes, and crinkling, silky, black hair, hanging to a bit of a waist; but the crinkling, black hair looked as if it actually needed brushing; and it was tied back with a purple velvet ribbon, which was anything but clean. I had never seen a lovelier, more supple little figure: it was so lithe, and soft, and round; but her crimson cashmere morning robe was soiled and frayed; and the seam on one of her shoulders had come unstitched, and showed the white skin through plainly. Even her feet—such pretty feet—were not tidy. One of her slippers had burst out, and the other had lost its rosette. But she did not seem to care about her appearance, and drew up the chair I offered her

close to mine, and began to talk with a careless freedom that made me almost catch my breath.

"I am Lina," she said, as unceremoniously as if she had known me for years. "Lina Clangarthe, from the rooms up-stairs; and I thought I would come to see you. Mamma said I might, because we know Mr. Lowther so well. You have been housekeeper in his family ever since he was born, he says."

I told her that I had, and answered all her questions as well as I could, though she asked a great many. The fact was, she asked questions all the time, and seemed so sweet-tempered about it that I could not help liking the poor, neglected child. And she was as ready to answer questions as she was to ask them; and to my bewilderment, told me all about the family affairs, speaking just as gayly about their family troubles as if the whole affair was a joke.

"And so it is a joke," she said, "and fine fun we have out of it, sometimes. If it wasn't for

Lady Medora, and her lectures, and the tracts she sticks in the boxes of old finery she sends us, we shouldn't mind it a bit."

Lady Medora was her father's sister, I found out, and was a very rigid person. She sent them boxes of her cast-off finery, two or three times a year, and when they came, they were sure to herald a new lecture on the family frivolity, and a new supply of tracts.

"I wore one in the toe of a slipper for a week," Lina said. "Her ladyship had stuffed it in, and I never should have seen it, but that Fergus's terrier was playing with the rosette, and tore the kid, and pulled it out."

I really thought I must be dreaming, it seemed so strange that the pretty, incomprehensible creature should be revealing the family secrets so frankly; but she rattled on as gayly as if there was nothing at all remarkable in her queer confidences.

"I am so glad you have come," she said. "I

like old ladies, and you look so nice and good-natured. I shall come in and see you often, if you don't mind. You won't mind, will you? Besides, I am glad for something else. As long as you are here, it won't be the least bit improper to talk to Mr. Jack, when I come in to borrow things. I often come in to borrow things, and I can't help talking when he begins, though I suppose it is a tiny mite improper. And mamma says I must be discreet; but the fact is, my darling Mrs. Mallon, we are not a discreet family. I often think there must be the least taste of vagabond blood in our veins, if we are Clangarthes."

I was so sorry for her, so fearful of the danger her beauty, and ignorance, and high spirits might throw her into, that, even while she laughed, I felt heavy-hearted. What sort of a woman could she be, this mother, who let the pretty creature run in and out of a gentleman's private rooms, to borrow things, and listen to

whatever flattering nonsense he chose to talk to her? In the liking I had taken to her, I couldn't help speaking a word or two, which I thought might serve as a motherly hint.

"I am glad I have come too, my dear," I said to her. "And I hope you won't take it hardly if I say I am glad for your sake. I hope you will come and see me often; and if you want to borrow anything, just run in here, right to me, because you are quite right in thinking it is not quite proper to apply to Mr. Jack. You are too young and pretty for such things to be quite discreet, my love."

From the bottom of my old woman's heart, I felt that she was too good and innocent to be trifled with, and I knew Mr. Jack too well to hope that he meant to act honorably by her. But I did not think of the worst then. God knows I never believed his heart could be as black as it proved itself. I thought it quite likely that he might talk nonsense, and flatter her with hopes

he never meant to realize ; but I never went so far as to think he could mean to bring misery and despair on this pretty, ignorant young thing, whose heart was so fresh and childish.

She sat and talked to me for more than an hour, and the more she talked, the more I liked her light-hearted, affectionate ways, and the more I wished she had a better mother to guide her. It seemed a trifle curious, too, that I, with all my staid, old-womanish notions, should have taken such a fancy ; but, somehow, my heart warmed toward her, and she seemed to see it. I knew, that, at first, the innocent rattlebrain had only come to coax her way into my heart, for Mr. Jack's sake, but I could see plainly enough, in the end, that she was quite honest in her liking for me, and would take any motherly counsel I gave her.

I could not help thinking about her when she was gone, and wishing that she was not so ready to admire Mr. Jack's fine ways and handsome

face. He was handsome enough, it cannot be denied; and he was the very style of beauty to take a girl's fancy. He was slight and lithe-limbed, and dark as a Spaniard. Indeed, there had been, two or three centuries ago, a touch of Spanish blood in the Lowther family, and now and then it broke out again, in a pair of dense, black eyes, a slow, sweet smile, and a graceful languor of motion. My lady's husband had possessed the dark eyes, but the rest had come to Mr. Jack, and it was easy enough to see how a girl like Lina Clangarthe, would passionately admire his beauty and careless haughtiness.

CHAPTER II.

WATCHED; NOT WARNED.

THAT night, for the first time since my arrival, Mr. Jack paid me a visit, and the moment I saw him I knew why he had come. And, after he had talked about other things for a while, he spoke out, carelessly enough.

"You had a visitor, this morning, Gorish tells me," he said.

The words were quiet-sounding, to be sure, but I did not trust them; for, bold and deil-may-care as he was by nature, he did not look me in the face when he spoke. He looked down, at the half-smoked cigar in his hand, so that his black lashes cast a curious shadow over his long, dark, half-closed eyes.

"Yes, I had a visitor," I answered, as brief as possible.

He smiled languidly, as he smoothed a loose leaf round the cigar, with his strong, white fingers.

"A pretty one, too," he said. "However scandalized you may be with your recollection of lovely, untidy hair, and lovely untidy figure, you will agree with me there, I am sure."

"Yes, sir," I replied, gravely, again. "A pretty one and a bright one. A bright, affectionate, loving one, with a fresh, true heart, I think."

He smiled again, lightly, touching the ash of his cigar.

"Ah!" he said, in a low, half-indifferent sort of tone; and then he put the cigar in his mouth again, and went on smoking, as if he had forgotten all about what we had been saying. It was a way of his to pass things by, and become indifferent to them in a moment. It had been so with his toys and pets, as a child; and it was so even with his friends, and his extravagant fancies.

He said nothing more to me about Miss Lina, and I was glad to find he didn't. It gave me some hope that he had not taken any great fancy to her, as I had at first imagined he had. His fancies were not pleasant things to cope with; and I knew such a fancy as this could come to no good.

But before I had been in the house many days, I found that the Major and he were great friends, and that Mrs. Clangarthe admired him as much as her daughter did. She had a great weakness for beauty, and Mr. Jack's dark eyes won her from the first. He spent hours in their apartments, passing in and out in the queer, informal way, everybody who had dealings with them seemed to adopt; and it was plain that he was always welcome, for the Major made a great to-do over him, and Mrs. Clangarthe would laugh and talk to him in the good-natured, light-headed fashion which seemed natural to her. The Major was pretty deeply in his debt, Mr. Jack's valet,

Gorish, told me, and was continually borrowing fresh supplies ; but for the matter of that, Gorish added, he was in debt over head and ears, and borrowed, right and left, wherever there was a chance.

As I have said before, there were plenty of visitors constantly coming to the house, most of them military men like the Major, and all of them appeared to be of one opinion regarding Miss Lina. They all admired her, and all made love to her, and I must say that I believe some of the younger ones were really in earnest. And no wonder. When she was dressed, as she was always of an evening, with her lovely figure, lovely face, lovely hair, and reckless high spirits, I am sure there was not a more beautiful creature in London. In spite of their untidy ways, the Clangarthes had a wonderful taste in dress ; and what with Lady Medora's presents, and going into debt, they kept up in a way that was astonishing.

But with all the attention she received, and all

the fine speeches that were poured into her pretty ready ears, it was easy to see that Miss Lina cared for none of them but Mr. Jack. She gave way to him in an innocent, open, girlish way, and she tried to amuse him. She was just the generous young creature to be a tender, willing slave, through bitter and sweet. If she loved her husband, he might be her tyrant, if he had the will; and the more I saw, the less I fancied Mr. Jack's winning her warm, loving heart, to play the tyrant over.

I saw a great deal of the family, and had the chance to watch, because, in a short time, I found that I might be of service, in several little ways; and finally, partly through my liking for the girl, and partly at Mr Jack's request, I fell into the habit of superintending things, here and there, and helping the servants, when they had company. And so the friendship between Miss Lina and myself was strengthened. She began to make a confidante of me, in more ways than one.

She told me about her admirers, and laughed at them, in a hearty, enjoyable way which had not a bit of deceit about it. She showed me her dresses, and came to me for help, when they wanted mending or altering ; and when I did anything for her she would kneel on the carpet at my side, with her big gray eyes all a-light with wonder and gratitude. I never helped her in the least, without getting an affectionate burst of thanks, and an impulsive caress. It was her nature to overflow with gratitude and pleasure about small things, and I was the last person in the world to try to restrain her.

They were having one of their free-and-easy little suppers one night, and I had noted among the guests a gentleman I had not seen before. He was not an officer, but a civilian, and though he was well-looking enough, there was a stiffness about his manner, and a haughty pretentiousness in his blonde face, that rendered him by no means as prepossessing as the genial, finely-made,

epauletted men, who were so fond of thronging the rooms. "Sir Denis," I heard them call him; and I noticed that he seemed very much pleased with Miss Lina, and showed it pretty plainly, in a certain stiffly-polite fashion. It appeared, too, that he was a favorite of Mrs. Clangarthe, for she took a great deal of trouble to draw him out, and evidently wished that Lina would be attentive. But I understood Miss Lina very well by this time, and saw that she was rather uneasy. She was trying very hard to be obediently entertaining; but she was not getting along very well, and was not enjoying herself as she usually did. I had promised Mr. Jack to undertake the management of things that night, and in passing to and fro before the opened doors, I saw that, as she danced with Sir Denis, and talked to him, there was a restless look in her eyes, and a queer, little eager color on her cheeks. She looked uncomfortable, and I guessed the reason why. Sir Denis had taken Mr. Jack's place so com-

pletely, that the two had hardly spoken a word to each other ; and the poor child was troubling herself about it, and fancying that he was troubled too. But he was bearing it very well, I thought. He was making himself agreeable to a tall young lady with a fine figure, and an amber-satin dress : and seemed to be enjoying himself pretty well, to judge from his face, and the young lady's rather loud laughs. He did not take much notice of Miss Lina, and after a while, I think, she began to notice it, for the color in her cheeks died out, and the uneasy look in her eyes deepened. For my part I felt almost angry. I knew what his indifference meant. He knew his power over her, and meant to exercise it. He took the tall young lady in amber satin down to supper, and he hung over her, and talked nonsense, in a half-joking way, that was torture to the poor child who sat opposite, by the side of her ceremonious admirer, the uneasy color coming and going as she listened to the burst of

laughter from their side of the long, narrow table. But at last Mr. Jack got tired of the talkative young woman in amber, and handing her over to somebody else, made his way across the room, as if he was going to leave it.

I was in a room on the other side of the hall, and could see everything ; and the hidden misery in Miss Lina's eyes told me that if she could not break from Sir Denis in one way, she would in another. And so she did ; for in a minute more, she was out in the hall, and half way down the stair-case after Mr. Jack, and was speaking to him all in a wild flutter, half-frightened, half-daring.

“ Mr. Lowther ! ” she said. “ Jack ! Don't go.”

I shall never forget how she looked, just as she stood there, at that minute, the troubled red on her cheeks, the eager girl's desperateness in her big eyes. It is such girls as Lina Clangarthe, who bear misery and shame, because their hearts

are tender, and the chances are against them ; it is such girls who need the world's pity, and God's help, when the worst comes to the worst. A woman, less ignorant of the world's ways, would have known better than to let Mr. Jack see she could not bear a shadow of neglect.

“Jack ! Don't go !”

A little shiver ran over me as I heard her say it. I did not know before that they had gone so far as that, and my heart quickened forebodingly as he stopped and turned to look up at her. Cruel as it may seem, I was almost ready to pray that he might not hear her, and would go on without answering. She was so pretty — so pretty ! The dazzling light seemed all to shine upon her full, soft, white shoulders and arms ; even the shining white billows of her silk train could not make her look anything but a child. The light was so bright that the roses that drooped in her bosom and clung to her loose, soft hair, were as red as blood.

She was pretty enough to bring him back whether he cared for her or not; and he came, smiling, as if nothing had happened, and stood a few steps below her, as she slipped into a sitting posture, on the stairs, looking down at him, with her soul in her eyes, and her heart's blood in her cheeks, all in a flutter of joy at his coming, and wonder at her own daring.

“Ah, Jack!” she said, “you are not vexed, are you? Not vexed with me?”

CHAPTER III.

THE TIDE IS TURNING.

THEY were so near me that I could hear every word they said, and see every change in either face; and I saw the slow gleam of triumph grow into Mr. Jack's black eyes; the evil, handsome eyes he had inherited from that Spanish ancestor. It was only a small triumph, but it was one, and the least of triumphs pleased him. So he stood looking up at her, and smiling a little, as he leaned on the balustrade.

"You seemed to be fully occupied," he said. "I thought, perhaps, Sir Denis could fill my place; but, of course, I am not vexed. A man's not apt to be, when he sees himself thrown over for another — is he?"

All the color fell away from her face, and she broke out upon him almost piteously.

“Oh, Jack! oh, Jack, don’t! You know — you *do* know it wasn’t my fault. I have been miserable all night. And, besides,” turning on him with a swift little touch of pathetic reproach, “weren’t you talking to Norah Delamore?”

Perhaps her prettiness, and the eager appeal in her lovely eyes touched him. At all events, after an odd little pause, he spoke to her in another tone.

“Where is your cloak?” he said. Go, and put it on, Lina, and come here to me again. I want you.”

She sprang up, in a minute, as bright as could be, and went without a word; and in less time than it takes me to write it, she was back again, with a bright, rose-pink opera-cloak on, her eyes shining from under its hood like diamonds.

“Is it the garden?” she said to him, slipping her hand into his arm, and laughing a happy little laugh. “Is it into the garden, Jack?”

“It is where we shall be out of the way,” he

answered, softening his cruel voice. "Out of the way, and together, and happy." And he slipped his treacherous arm about her little waist, and drawing her to his side, bent over, and kissed her full on her blooming lips. I knew there was little room for hope after that. Having gone so far, he would go farther, if the fancy held him; and as soon as he was tired, he would fling her away without a pang of remorse. I could not help feeling a thought bitter against the heedless woman, in the bright room near them. I could hear her laughing, and I could hear the Major laughing, too; and I could not resist an impulse of impatience at their blindness. I never had children of my own, but I felt sure that no daughter of mine, if I had ever had one, would have been left thus, helplessly, to herself, as Lina Clangarthe was.

And this was only one occasion out of a thousand such. Every day I saw more of an imprudence, which, to my mind, seemed actually

terrible. The people who visited the house were as careless and easy-going as the Clangarthes themselves ; and Lina was wonderfully popular among both men and women. She was pretty enough to have drawn the world after her, and her queer, bright, high spirits, and reckless inclination for fun, were the very things to please people, who thought of nothing but how to enjoy life and amuse themselves.

“ We take life easy,” said Lina to me one day “ Where’s the use of taking it hard, and fretting like Lady Medora. It only makes people ill-natured. We can’t help being poor and in debt, but we can help fretting about it, can’t we, Mrs. Mallon ? ”

There never was a lighter-hearted creature on earth than she was then. It appeared as though she was overrunning with fun and life. There was never a dull look on her bright face, or a hard word on her lip. She had a laugh and a jest for every one ; and there was not a servant

in the house, among all the ill-paid lot, who was not ready to do anything for Miss Lina. It is my opinion that but for her there would scarcely have been a servant on the place. When there was money in the house, she always remembered them, and when there was none, she coaxed them into a good humor. Her maid got her dresses before they were half-worn, and the cook borrowed her jewelry, quite secure in her good-nature, even if she was found out. Ill-regulated as everything was, there was something half-comical about it all. They were so good-natured and easy, and life seemed such an enjoyable affair. Even the ill-used tradesmen, who dunned them from morning till night, went away somewhat pacified, after an interview with Lina, or the Major, though there is no doubt they afterward wondered at their own indiscretion in allowing themselves to be so soothed. It is my impression that Lady Medora herself had a sense of her own unfitness to cope with them, for though she

sent box after box of old finery, and tracts enough to have converted a whole Fiji island, she never visited them.

“And all the better,” said Lina, tossing over the contents of one of said boxes on its arrival. “It would only make her uncomfortable, poor soul. She wouldn’t understand us, you know, and we shouldn’t understand her. It’s all the better, and we are very grateful to her, I am sure. It’s a blessed thing for us, though, that there’s one saint in the family to pray us all out of purgatory. Lady Medora is a very good woman, Mrs. Mallon. Dear me! I wonder where she wore this rose-colored satin dress. I am going to shake the tracts out of the trimmings, and try it on.”

I often thought, that with a good mother, she would have been far better than most girls. My pretty Miss Lina, she was better as it was, in spite of her wild ways. I never heard an ill-natured word from her lips, queer as some of

her speeches were, and she was generous and affectionate beyond measure. The tribe of neglected children, who tumbled about the rooms, were fonder of her than they were of any living thing; and she would give up her own pleasure any day to romp with them, when they asked her, which they were by no means chary of doing.

And through watching her, and noticing little things, I saw that her feeling for Mr. Jack was love of the intensest kind; and I saw, too, that it grew stronger every day, and that he led her on. And just as far as he chose to lead, she followed, and was ignorantly happy. He spent his evenings with her; and the Major and Mrs. Clangarthe looked on in their usual amiable, irresponsible way. He rode out with her, and the Major admired Lina's fine figure complacently, as the two cantered away, while Mrs. Clangarthe nodded them a farewell from the drawing-room window.

“Lina is like Lady Anastasia Derry, my dear. Don’t you think so?” Mrs. Clangarthe was fond of saying. “You remember Lady Anastasia Derry, Major, and she was Col. Enniskillen’s daughter, and her mother was a Wexford?”

The memory of her aristocratic antecedents was a great source of pleasure to Mrs. Clangarthe, and she clung to it with whimsical pertinacity. She was anxious that Lina should make a good marriage, though I often thought she went about managing the matter in a queer way. She forgot that gentlemen of position and title don’t always choose their wives for a pretty face. They are a trifle more particular in these days than they were, or else the old romantic stories have very little foundation.

But it was Mrs. Clangarthe’s plans that cast the first shadow over Miss Lina’s life. I do not think the girl had ever known a shadow before; but a cloud came at last, and its darkness was too heavy for her.

It had first showed itself the night when the tall, stiff, young man they called Sir Denis followed her about, and roused Mr. Jack to making love to the young woman in amber satin ; and in the course of time this same shadow became the cloud. The stiff young gentleman came to the house pretty often, after the supper party, and when he came he always fastened himself to Miss Lina, and kept Mr. Jack in the shade. She bore it at first good-humoredly, as she always bore disagreeable things ; but after awhile it began to trouble her. Whether he cared for her or not, Mr. Jack did not care to have a rival ; and when Sir Denis made himself unpleasant, Lina always suffered for it. Mr. Jack did not quarrel with her, he was too wary for that ; he simply let her alone, and played indifference, until the poor, warm-hearted, impulsive girl was wretched and reckless enough for anything. She was afraid of vexing him, and afraid of vexing her mother ; so between the two she grew desperate. She began

to fret in secret, and lost her reckless high spirits, and was only gay by fits and starts.

Mr. Jack made it worse than it was. He knew how to manage her, and by a word, dropped here and there, put it into her mind that her mother's foolish, blind persistence was unnatural cruelty, and that she would be forced to make a sacrifice which would render her wretched for life. The fact was, Mrs. Clangarthe's persistence was only weak ambition, and if Lina had been left alone, the matter would have come to its natural termination, smoothly enough. But just as Mr. Jack had tortured his pets in his childhood, he tortured this poor child now, and the trouble was too much for her. She was not used to heart-pain, and at last it broke her down and made her desperate.

She came to my room, almost wild, one day, after Sir Denis had left the house. He had been more than usually pretentiously officious, and Mrs. Clangarthe had encouraged him.

“I think he will propose to you soon, Lina,” she had said, after he was gone. “You are so lucky. Now, if Annette and Lucia only marry as well when they grow up, I shall be perfectly satisfied.” And when, a few minutes later, Mr. Jack came in, she poured out to him her delight at Lina’s success, considering that, as the friend of the family, he was the person most likely to sympathize with her.

There was a spot of flaming scarlet on Lina’s cheek, and a dangerous, wild look in her eyes, when she came to me; and she had not been with me five minutes, before she broke out, tortured with humiliation, and pain, and fear, telling me the whole story.

“She must be mad,” she ended. “She is mad, and she is driving me mad too. I shall do something desperate and wicked, if they don’t leave me alone. They cannot see that — that nothing on earth could buy me from my love.”

She was sitting on a low stool, at my feet, and

her long hair almost hid her face ; but when she said that, she tossed the hair back, and looked up at me, with an almost defiant daring in her eyes.

“It is not right to say that, I suppose,” she said. “It is not right to acknowledge that I have a true love. Women are not allowed to tell the truth about such things. But you are not blind, if all the rest are. You can see how the truth stands.” And then she broke down, all in a sudden shame at herself, and sobbed like a wronged child.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE LETTER.

A strange alteration in her manner came about after this. She was not so frank, and even over her brightest moods there was a shadow. But her trouble only made her fonder of Mr. Jack than ever, and I noticed that she was feverishly anxious to please him. I was sorry to see, too, that she put herself into his way, a great deal more than was quite prudent; but she was too miserable, and too ignorant of the ways of the world to be discreet; and so I could not blame her, though I knew she was working against herself. She met him upon the stairs half a dozen times in a day, and I knew very well that the solitary walks she took, were taken only in the desperate hope of seeing, or speaking to him.

“I should die, if I didn’t see him,” she broke out once to me. “Don’t tell me he’ll like me the less for it, Mrs. Mallon ; men can’t be so cruel as that.”

She had always been fond of walking on the beach, and from my window I had often watched her strolling on the waste of sands, that the fishermen called the Moaning Bar, with the children, and letting them pull her about, as not one girl in a dozen would have done. But she never took the children with her now. She walked out alone, though my old eyes were quite sharp enough to see she was not often alone long. Day after day, Mr. Jack would follow her down to their trysting place on the Bar, and for hours I could see them, as they sat sheltered by the rocks, Miss Lina’s scarlet jacket, a bright bit of color, contrasted with sea, and sand, and sky.

And in her room up-stairs, Mrs. Clangarthe made herself comfortable, over the success of her plans. She was fond of Lina, as every one else

was ; she was proud of her beauty, and wished to see her happy ; and fancying a good marriage the boon most to be desired, she worked industriously in her behalf, in her own easy-natured, shiftless style. Mr. Lowther was the Major's friend, and had lent the Major money ; accordingly, nothing could be more pleasantly desirable than that he should amuse Lina, and Lina should amuse him.

“I like to see young people enjoy themselves, Mrs. Mallon,” she said, sweet-temperedly, to me. “And Lina always enjoys herself, when she is with Mr. Lowther. She wants brightening a little, too, now, though I am sure I don't see why she should, when her prospects are so good ; but she has not been in good spirits, lately.”

That evening Lina came in from her walk later than usual. It was so late, indeed, that the yellow fog curtained both sea and shore, and the street-lamps were beginning to twinkle here and there. She did not go up stairs, but came into my room, and the moment she entered, I saw

that something was wrong. Her face was pale and haggard, but there was a spot on each cheek, as bright as her scarlet jacket, and in her hand she held a letter.

She sat down on a footstool, as she always did. For a minute or so she did not speak. But all at once she began to tremble, and cry, and pull at the collar of her sacque, as if it was hurting her.

“Oh, Mrs. Mallon,” she cried, “Oh, Mrs. Mallon, just look here! What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?” And then she tossed the letter into my lap, and hid her face in her hands, under her loose, fog-damped hair.

“Do you mean that I must read it, my dear?” I asked, feeling faint at heart; for just at that moment a horrible thought flashed across my mind — a thought I had never even approached before.

She nodded her head without speaking, and so I opened it; and it was from no less a person than Lady Medora Darrel herself.

Lady Medora had heard rumors of Sir Denis's attention to her niece, and was so far pleased as to wish to encourage them. Sir Denis was the son of a friend of hers, and, of course, unexceptionable; and she discussed the whole matter with a queer frankness, which somehow reminded me of the Clangarthes themselves.

"A marriage like this is more than I ever looked for," she wrote. "Living as you do, you could hardly expect to make such a match. I shall write to your mother at once, and, in the meantime, you may tell her that I will extend to her all the assistance in my power, as regards your bridal *trousseau*, when you need it. After your marriage, I shall be glad to receive you at my house, and hope that a change will be effected in your hitherto frivolous life."

A strange sound, half a choked sob, and half a bitter laugh startled me as I finished reading, and I looked up to find Lina in a white heat of scornful wrath.

“When I need it?” she said. “Good, that; isn’t it, Mrs. Mallon? She forgets the old adage, ‘first catch your hare.’ Sir Denis isn’t caught yet, and beside—” She stopped, and shut her white teeth together hard.

Then she broke out, fiercely,

“Do you know what that letter will do?” she said. “It will drive me to despair. It was bad enough before, and now they will take that up as if it was the best luck in the world. They laugh at her, all of them, but they are afraid of her, for all that.”

I comforted her to the best of my ability, and she tried to listen, but I saw it was of no use; before she went away I was in an agony of such doubt and fear as I had never known before in my life.

And this was not all. Just as she rose from her seat, I heard the hall-door open, and the sound of Mr. Jack’s footstep, and from the flash that leaped into her eye, I knew that as she

brushed out she was only hurrying to meet him. She was so excited and hurried that she forgot to close the door after her, and, as it stood open, I saw her meet him at the foot of the stair-case, with the letter in her hand.

“What is it, Lina?” I heard him say, half-tenderly, half-impatiently, as he caught sight of her, standing in the bright light.

She glanced up at him with a troubled face, and then all at once, the fire died out of it, and left her pale as death.

“Jack,” she whispered, almost breathlessly, “if you are going to save me, you must save me now.” And she dropped her head upon the hand she had laid on the balustrade without another word.

I shall never understand how it was possible that, through the long weeks that followed, a mother could be so carelessly blind as Mrs. Clangarthe showed herself. She seemed to enjoy life as much as ever; she was as sweet-tempered and

ready to be amused with trifles ; she played hostess at the gay little suppers, and angled for Sir Denis in seeming unconsciousness of the change in the pretty young face, hitherto so cloudlessly bright. It made my heart ache to watch this change as it grew. It was no longer the face that had smiled down on Mr. Jack from the staircase. There was a feverish trouble in its eyes ; its very smiles were feverish. I cannot describe the dumb pain and look of inward misery that took the place of the old light-heartedness.

But the girl said very little, though she grew paler every day. She bore up against her trouble almost defiantly, trying to make herself pretty in her lover's eyes, pretending to be gay, and even trying to tolerate Sir Denis. But she could not deceive me. My love for her had made my old eyes too quick. I think, too, that she understood this, for it was only before me that she ever gave in, and sometimes, when she was with me, she seemed to break down, though she tried

hard to make light of it, and always did it with a wretched ghost of a smile on her pale lips.

“Sir Denis was too much for me, to-night,” she would say, sometimes. “And — and, I have a headache. It makes me look pale, I dare say. Do I look pale, Mrs. Mallon?” trying to laugh. “I feel pale.”

But the time came when she ceased even trying to laugh, and would come to me, looking as white as death, trembling and crying.

“Don’t tell,” she would say. “Don’t tell. I am not well, you know; and Lady Medora has been bothering again. Let me have my cry out, and then I shall be better.”

I cannot put into words the horror of slow fear which grew upon me. I could not bear to think of it, and fought against it bitterly, trying to think it quite natural that her girlish troubles should make her hysterical and nervous; but at last I began to see a change in Mr. Jack, and this change crushed all my hopes. I began to

see that he was getting tired of his amusement; and I knew him so well that I recognized the alteration as soon as it came about; as soon as Miss Lina herself did. He began to try to avoid her, as if by accident at first, but more openly in the course of time. In the end, day after day passed by, in which he never entered their rooms.

I wakened earlier than usual one morning, and after dressing, went to my window to look out, as I had a habit of doing. The fog was just clearing away, and as my eyes became accustomed to the then floating mist, I glanced accidentally toward the Moaning Bar. Two figures were standing near the rocks together. It did not need a second glance to tell me whose they were. I knew them, in an instant; one by its attitude, the other by the scarlet jacket and long, falling hair. It was Lina Clangarthe and Mr. Jack!

He was lounging carelessly against a rock, when I looked, and she seemed to be speaking

to him passionately, wildly, desperately. She was holding out her hands, and clasping and wringing them as she talked; and he was listening without a gesture, simply listening and watching her.

My heart gave one fierce bound, and fairly stood still. For a moment it seemed that I scarcely breathed, and then I drew back behind the curtain, praying aloud.

“Lord, have mercy upon her! O Lord, have mercy upon her!” I cried.

It was all over, when I looked again. Mr. Jack had sauntered away, and Lina was walking rapidly along the beach, toward the street. She was walking hurriedly, and seemed to steady her slight, girlish figure with some difficulty. But she was not crying, and there was not a tear in her eyes, when, a few moments later, she came into the room.

“I have been out walking with Mr. Lowther,” she said, in a strange, steady voice. “And we

have had a bit of a quarrel, Mrs. Mallon. Lovers always have their little quarrels, don't they?"

She had seated herself at the window when she entered, and she was sitting there as she spoke, and the minute the words were out of her mouth, she turned suddenly, and looked at me.

"If you had been at the window, you might have seen us," she said, watching me keenly. "I did not know before that any of these windows fronted the Moaning Bar so directly."

"I think I did see you," I answered, as calmly as possible. "But my old eyes are not as young as they used to be, and I might be mistaken."

CHAPTER V.

WORN OUT.

THAT seemed to satisfy her, and for a while, she sat silent; but at last she spoke again.

“I am rather low-spirited, this morning,” she said. “Quarrels always make me miserable. I don’t think I am as strong as I used to be. I wish life wasn’t so long. I was thinking, this morning, it would be an easy sort of a way to end it, out there on the Moaning Bar, when the tide comes in.”

She spoke so deliberately and meditatively, that I was startled into making a slight exclamation.

“Why, Miss Lina!” I cried out.

She started a little, looked up at me, and laughed, faintly.

“Why not?” she said. “It would be easy

enough if one had the courage; and it wouldn't need much. The tide sweeps round the Bar so suddenly. And then there is no help, and one wouldn't need courage. Don't be frightened, though, Mrs. Mallon! I am not going to drown myself. I am too fond of life for that; besides, I want to make up with Jack." And she laughed again.

I was blind enough then to be deceived by her light manner, but I thought of her words afterward, and remembered, too, her little shudder, when she said, "And then there would be no help."

After that came a change again, stranger and more deceptive than the last. She regained her spirits too rapidly to seem natural; she never said anything against Sir Denis, and was even extravagantly gay in his presence. Her mother was fairly delighted, and exerted herself to her utmost, in the matter of dressing her and making her appear to advantage. They gave the little

suppers two or three times a week, and at such times, from my room, I could hear Lina's feverish laugh ringing out above everything. She had never seemed so reckless and light-hearted, and, as the guests passed out of the house, I often caught snatches of conversation among the men, which showed me that even those who had known her the longest were dazzled afresh, and puzzled a little.

But Mr. Jack's attentions were gradually falling off. His unceremonious visits were growing fewer and farther between. I was astonished to find that this did not seem to trouble Lina much, and was so far bewildered that I began to falter again. She did not contrive plans to meet him any longer; and when, by accident, they encountered each other on the stairs, or in the hall, she would give him a careless little nod, or a careless speech, and pass on as coolly as she might have done in the first days of their acquaintance. But one evening, after she had passed him so,

and the hall-door had closed upon him as he went out, I heard her feet flag somewhat in their passage up the stair-case, and in a moment more there came to my listening ears the dull, dead thud of a heavy fall.

There was no other sound, nothing but the fall, and, strange to say, no one seemed to hear it but myself; and hurrying out, I found lying on the mat, at the foot of the stairs, Lina Clangarthe, in a dead faint, her white face like a stone.

I went to the kitchen-door, and, calling one of the servants as quietly as possibly, made her help me to carry the prostrate figure into my room, and lay it on my sofa.

“Don’t say anything to the others,” I commanded the girl. “It is nothing but a faint, and would only alarm Mrs. Clangarthe unnecessarily.”

I sent her away before the poor child’s eyes were open, and then I set myself to work to restore her alone. But, before I began, I closed

the door. I think it must have been half an hour before she knew me, and when the great, speechful gray eyes unclosed, they turned upon me in an agony, needing not a word to express itself. It seemed to me as if I could not bear it. I thought my heart would burst.

“You fell down stairs, and fainted, my dear,” I said, as cheerfully as I could. “I suppose your foot slipped.”

She did not utter a sound, only looked at me, and then, all at once, at the door, as if she was frightened.

“Yes, my dear,” I answered, for I guessed what she was thinking of. “Yes, my dear, it’s locked. You see I thought there was no need to alarm the household, and frighten your mamma. It was only a faint, and you will be over it soon. You are almost over it now, only, of course, you feel weak, and tired, and don’t want to talk. Take a little of this wine, and then I will sit down, and you shall try to sleep.”

She took the wine, but her poor hands trembled so that I had to hold the glass to her lips. She did not speak even then, and, after she had swallowed it, she slipped down on to the sofa-cushion, with her white, young face upon her arm, and her long hair half-hiding it as she lay.

As for me, I set the wineglass aside, and went back to my seat at the window, which faced the Moaning Bar.

For two long hours I sat there with my work, looking out at the sea, and now and then glancing round at the helpless young face on the sofa. During those two hours this figure never stirred, but lay there without a movement, the white face half hidden by the heavy, loose hair. The silence was so heavy and terrible, and the time so long, in its dull, dragging by, that I could scarcely bear it. If I could only have helped her; if I could only have said one word of motherly comfort to her, I should have thanked God for it to the last day of my life. If this

was only a girl's heartache, it was a bitter one, indeed, and one that called for tender words and comfort; but if it was worse, there were no words that human tongue could utter, that could be too full of pity and prayer for this young creature, in her desolate strait.

I got up from my chair, at last, and went to her, kneeling down by her side, and touching her hair softly,

“Are you asleep, Miss Lina?” I asked.

She stirred a little, but she did not look up, as she answered,

“No.”

“Do you feel better?” I said, falteringly. “Fainting-fits are troublesome things, my dear; but there is not much danger in them, you know. I hope —”

I stopped there, because I could say no more. It seemed as if the spell upon her was broken, for she was beginning to shiver and tremble, and in a minute she was clinging to the cushion with

both her little hands, sobbing in a wild, gasping, choking way.

“Oh, Mrs. Mallon!” she cried out, again and again, “if you only knew what is in my heart to-night; if you only knew what is in my heart to-night! If you only — only — knew!”

I was trembling all over, myself, and crying, too, though I tried hard to speak quietly, as I stroked her hair, and patted her shoulder to soothe her.

“Tell me, my love,” I said. “Tell me, if you can, and I will try to help you. I am an old woman, my dear, and the Lord may show me how I might help you best. The Lord never fails us, you know, my dear.”

But she had lost all hope of controlling herself. She only sobbed, and gasped, and panted, with her hand clenched hard against her heart.

“There is no help for me,” she cried out. “There is no help. There is nothing but death! Nothing but death! Nothing but death and despair.”

The tide had come in, and gone down again into the darkness, long before she was still; and then it was time for her to go up stairs, for Mrs. Clangarthe was inquiring for her. She got up from the sofa, pale as death, and, with a strange, hollow look about her eyes. She had worn her wild grief out, but she had not uttered a word that might tell me surely whether my terrible fear had any foundation or not.

She gave a glance at herself as she passed the mirror, and when she reached the door, she turned, all of a sudden, in a wild, nervous way.

"You are not like other people," she said. "You are better, some way. I wish you were my mother."

I wonder if the people, who are used to reading stories, can guess how this one of mine is going to end. I wonder, too, if the most experienced of them would not have started, as I did that night, on hearing Lina Clangarthe's laugh ring out among the voices in the room above. I

think they would, and yet I did hear it. I heard it, threading through the bursts of merriment that came from the two or three of her father's fellow officers, who were his guests for the evening, and as I heard it, I trembled. She was talking to them, and even rattling off gay little French songs for them, one after the other. She was filling the whole drawing-room with her mirth.

Sir Denis was there, too, one of the servants told me, and she was drawing him on and dazzling him with her daring flashes of wit. And, toward the end of the evening, Mr. Jack came in, and went up stairs to join the party; and a few minutes later, to my bewilderment, I heard her laughing and jesting with him too.

They were always gay enough, and sometimes a trifle boisterous in that light-hearted way of theirs; but I had never heard them so merry as they seemed to be this night. Peal after peal of laughter came down the stair-case to my room.

“It’s Miss Lina is making them laugh so,” explained the major’s man. “Sure it’s in high spur’ts she is this evenin’. The ould fell’ys is houldin’ their sides wid the fun in her. It’s beyutiful she looks, too, Misthress Mallon, wid a color like a rose, and a light in her eye like foire, an’ me Lady Medora’s ould dress lookin’ new on her. Ah, but it’s Sir Denis is the lost boy, intirely.”

Barregan was just like the rest of the servants; he fairly adored Miss Lina, and noticed her every mood with as great an interest as if she had been a child of his own. The queer, careless ways of the family extended even to their free-and-easy intercourse with their servants.

It was later than usual when the company dispersed, perhaps because they had enjoyed themselves so well. I had sat in my room, for hours, listening, and wondering, and fearing, by turns, and was just setting Mr. Jack’s parlor to rights,

and bolting the shutters before going to bed, when I heard Sir Denis and Mr. Jack himself come out, Miss Lina following them on to the landing to have a last word. The parlor was quite dark, and they could not see me ; but I could see them plain enough ; and you may be sure my first look was at Miss Lina.

She was standing on the stairs, just as she had stood the night Mr. Jack kissed her. Her soft hair was floating over her wide, white shoulders, down to her bit of a waist, as she had a girl's fashion of wearing it all loose and curly ; and she had on the very dress Lady Medora had given her, the rose-colored satin. It was as Barregan had said, her eyes were like fire ; but just at this moment, as she looked down at the two men, there was scarcely a bit of color in her face, in spite of the light words she was speaking.

“And as you are going away,” she was saying to Mr. Jack, “I suppose I may as well say good-by to you, and ask you to give my love to Lady

Medora, if you see her, when you are in London. Don't tell any tales out of school though, or else she won't send me any more of her old dresses, and what would I do without them?"

"And you will try the sorrel mare with me to-morrow, Miss Clangarthe?" Sir Denis said, a sort of stiff confusion mixed with his admiration of her. "She paces well, I can vouch; and we can ride past the Moaning Bar, and on to the Shingle Road, after the tide goes down."

I saw her look down at his face, for one second, with a strange expression, just as if she had forgotten herself; but it was only for one moment; the next she answered him as gayly as ever, only with an odd, feverish, short laugh. "Yes," she said, "I'll remember. When the tide goes down — if nothing happens from now till then. And what could happen? After the tide goes down, then. Good-night." And she gave him a bright, little nod.

"Good-night, Miss Clangarthe," he answered,

and went down stairs with his thin face all in a glow of pleasure.

In his momentary excitement, he had almost forgotten his companion, but Mr. Jack called after him, the next minute.

“Wait a minute, Dermot,” he said. Then he turned to the bright-robed young figure on the stair above him, and as he looked into the white, young face, held out his hand.

“Good night, Lina,” he said.

She never stirred. Just stood there, white and still, looking right into his evil, handsome, black eyes, without a word. She did not take his hand, or even notice it.

“Good-by,” she said, at last.

That was all. Not another word; and after taking another look at her, he turned away, as if she had puzzled him a little, and he was too indifferent to care about translating her.

She watched him down the stair-case, through the hall, out into the street, without stirring; and then she turned round, and walked slowly

up to her own room ; and the last glimpse I had of her in life, showed me that queer, calm look in her girl's eyes, and that queer steadiness on her white face.

I have often thought, since then, of the wild desperateness, that must have been in that poor, wronged young thing's mad heart, that dreadful night. I have shuddered, and cried like a child, over the picture that will sometimes force itself upon my mind : the picture of that steadfast face, as it must have looked during the long hours that passed before daylight came. I have fancied that I could see it, and understand the depth of despair and misery which this girl of seventeen years old must have struggled with, in the silence of midnight. There had never been a shadow on her life before, and the blackness of death had fallen upon her almost in an hour. Did she pray one, short, desperate prayer, or did she face her fate, remembering nothing, but what she left behind, and what life might have held for her ?

CHAPTER VI.

A DESPERATE RESOLUTION.

I WAS sitting at my little parlor window, just as I always did, and the tide was sweeping back, wave by wave, over the sand, and over the rocks, and over the Moaning Bar. It had been a dull, gray morning, and even now the sun was scarcely to be seen at all, as it struggled through the banks of leaden clouds. I was feeling troubled, and not very well. I had not slept much during the night, and losing rest always hurts me. But somehow, this morning, it was my mind that felt heavy, and it was so heavy that I forgot my tired old limbs altogether. I was thinking of Miss Lina, and had been thinking of her all night. I was beginning to fear something I had not thought of before; and the thought of it chilled me to the heart.

When first it struck me, I turned to the sea, with a quick, cold pulse-beat, and my eyes fell on the Moaning Bar, in shrinking terror. The slow, creeping waves, tossing over it now, had such a cruel, hungry look in the gray light. The tide always crept round the low barren stretch of sand, just in a stealthy sort of way, and no human being, who chanced to linger there a moment too late, need turn his face to the higher shore again, for he had met his doom. It was a cruel place, and I had always felt a dread of it, even when the tide was down. The coast people feared it, with something like superstitious horror, and told fearful stories of the maddened wails they had heard, and the stony, rigid forms that had been swept back to the shore, once or twice, at ebb of tide.

I could not bear to look at it this morning ; but, somehow, it had a strange fascination for me ; and I sat watching it until the tops of the rocks were bare. The sea was not long in creep-

ing backward then, and before many minutes the water was falling rapidly, and the rocks stood out, bold and black, in a little cluster that made a sheltered nook, where the sea-weed always lay in heaps, tangled with white sea-shells.

There was a heap of such sea-weed, lying half out of the low water now. I could see it quite plainly, as it lay caught among the rocks. After my first glance, I found myself staring at it, fascinated — I could not say why — curiously. The little running waves were playing with it, and lifting it lightly as they retreated.

A sound in the hall, and a summons from outside roused me. I got up from my seat, restlessly, opened the door, and confronted the major's man, who stood upon the threshold, making his stiff, military salute.

"It's Miss Lina I was ordhered to ax about, Misthress Mallon," he said, a trifle uneasily. "The misthress sent me to saa if she was here. Sir Denis is waitin' for her, and the misthress

thought, mebbe, she had stepped into your room, whin she kem in."

I stared at him blankly for a moment. Then my startled mind began to take in vaguely the strange expression on the poor fellow's face. There was actually a shade of pallor on his sun-burnt skin, and his eye met mine restlessly. Something was the matter, I knew, and he was afraid to speak of it.

"Barregan," I broke out, all in a tremble, "what is the matter? You are trying to hide something from me. What is it you are trying to hide?"

I saw him turn pale then in actual earnest, and when he answered me, his voice shook.

"Might I step insoide, Misthress Mallon?" he said. "I'd like to have a wurred wid yez."

I motioned him in, and shut the door.

"What is it?" I cried out sharply. "You are not afraid that" — And then I stopped short, in spite of the terrible fear that rushed upon me.

“She—she went out early,” he said, hoarsely, “an’ she’s not come in yet, though she promised to try Sir Dinnis’s sorrel. There’s a nasty bit of sand down on the Bar, ye know, and she always wint there. She was goin’ there whin I met her, and someways she looked white and poorly, but she turned her purty, pale face to me, and says, ‘Good mornin’ to ye, Barregan. I’m goin’ for a little walk on the sands,’ and then she looks over her shoulder at me, two or three times, before she was out of sight. I darn’t say a wurred to the misthress. I darn’t; I thought I’d come here first.”

The sun had struggled through the clouds at last, and as I turned to the window, shaken and strengthless, it burst forth in such sudden brightness, that I could see nothing plainly. But little as I could distinguish, my blinded eyes caught a glimpse of something, that made me drop into my chair, with hardly voice to speak.

“Look out there,” I said to the poor stricken

fellow. "There is a heap of — of sea-weed, I think, caught on the rocks, on the Moaning Bar. There is not a bit of color caught among it, is there? The sun blinds me so that I cannot see. There isn't a bit of scarlet there, is there? Look well before you speak, for God's sake!"

He did not need to look a second time. Just one glance, and he broke away, with a cry of horror, that roused the whole household; and brought servants, and master, and mistress, hurrying out of the rooms, with white, scared faces.

Just that one cry, and a few wild terror-stricken words, and the cry was echoed again, until the roof rang with its shrill horror, as Mrs. Clangarthe fell prostrate upon the stair-case landing, with a face like the dead.

We raised her and carried her to her room, scarcely any one of us knew how; for the whole house was full of the cries of wailing, hurrying servants, and wailing, terrified children. There was not one of them but had loved her; there

was not one of them, from the best to the worst, who was not stricken as with the hand of death.

They were all crowded about the windows, weeping aloud, as they watched the hurrying figures flying across the sands, toward the bit of scarlet color caught in the nook of rocks. Dozens of the coast people, men, women, and children, catching a hint of the truth, left their work in boats and huts and ran, as it were, for dear life, through the shallow water the tide had left on the low beach, joining one another by twos and threes, until a great crowd of strange figures stood about the rocks, around Sir Denis, and around the man who had first bent over the something, which was not sea-weed, but a dead girl's body.

Perhaps, among all the crowd of rough watchers, there was not one who had not a kindly remembrance of the bright, girlish face, and light-hearted ways; perhaps there was scarcely one of them to whom she had not, at some time,

spoken a careless, sweet-tempered word of greeting. She had been used to speak to the roughest of them when she met them, and in the most unresponsive of their half-savage moods, they had felt an odd sort of liking for her and her bright beauty.

It seemed almost like Fate that they should bring her into my little room, and lay her upon the sofa, where she had lain through the long, silent, wretched hours only so few days before. But her face was not hidden now upon the cushion; it lay still and white, upturned to every eye; and the long hair that had veiled it was wet and dank with the salt sea, and tangled with sea, and sand, and shells.

If she had died to keep a secret, she had not died in vain, for no one but myself guessed that any secret existed. She must have forgotten the tide, until it had crept around the Bar, and it was too late to turn back, they said among themselves; and, as they spoke, I bent over her, and

smoothed her pretty, tangled hair, so that they could not see my face, and guess that I had anything to hide from them. But as I listened, I understood, quite plainly, what the poor desperate child had meant when she cried out to me, "Oh, if you only knew what is in my heart, to-night!" I knew then, for her own dead lips told me, and I knew too, what a terrible strength of resolution had kept the fire in her eye, and the color in her cheek as she jested and laughed with the rest, within the very sound of the waves which she knew would sweep over her dead body on the morrow.

"It would not take much courage, when the tide came up," she had said, and I remembered the words, shuddering at the thought of how the waves must have looked, as she watched them running up nearer and nearer, until the gray, white line was all around her, and it was too late to look back, or repent.

But it was over now, and it could not have

taken long to hush her cries, if she had uttered any; it could not have been many minutes, at the most, after the first gasp, in the rush of surf, before she was as quiet as she looked now, lying on my sofa, with the strange rest on her pretty face.

“She looks so calm, someway,” poor Mrs. Clangarthe wailed. “And she was so pretty, too, and I was so proud of her. Oh, my poor, poor Lina! I don’t think Sir Denis will ever get over it, Mrs. Mallon. He was going to propose to her this morning, and Lina had promised me she would accept him, if he did.”

When the dreadful day was over, and the house was dark and quiet, I sat in my little room again, thinking sadly of the still chamber upstairs, where the slender, quiet figure lay on the bed. As I sat brooding over the fire, I heard the door open, and Mr. Jack came in, and stood on the hearth, with the stealthy, evil look in his handsome, bold, black eyes.

Whether he suspected me or not, he did not care to meet my glance; and, as he spoke, he carelessly struck a match on the mantel to light a cigar he held.

“I am going to London, to-morrow,” he said, “and shall not need you any longer. You can go back to Marshlands as soon as you wish. I shall not return here again.”

I looked at his wicked, handsome face steadily, and for the moment hated it as I had never hated anything human before.

“Sir,” I said, “have you been up-stairs?”

He nodded carelessly, but changed color a little, nevertheless.

“Yes,” he answered.

“And you have seen — her?”

He nodded again, flinching, I could see.

I do not know what held me up, but I felt that I must speak now, or die.

“Do you remember what we said about that dead girl, once before, in this very room?” I

asked. "About her face? Do you remember what I said, about its being a tender, innocent face, which knew no wrong, and held none? Do you remember?"

He started slightly, and turned, staring wildly at me.

"What the deuce" — he began.

But I stopped him. I rose up from my chair, and faced him, trembling in every limb, and sobbing in a grief that was too much for me. I remembered the pretty young face, as I saw it first, with the innocent light in its eye, and then I thought of how the tide had gone down on the Moaning Bar, leaving the bit of bright color lying in the nook of rocks.

"Man!" I said, "you are a villain, and God will never forgive you. The curse of a lost life will be upon you forever."

He did not say a word, fierce as was the anger that flashed into his cruel face. He had not a word to say. He knew that his sin had found

him out, and that there was no defence for him, if he cared to make one. For one moment he stood and tried to brave me with a sneer, the blood flushing his dark skin, and the flare of passion in his eyes. The next, he faltered, and turned upon his heel, and so left me forever.

I did not see him again, and was thankful that I did not. I knew that, if my lady had been living, she would have absolved me from my promise, and knowing this, I was not ashamed to break it myself. I had been his faithful servant, and he had used me for an innocent creature's wrong, and so I could be faithful no longer. He went away, as he said he would, and I, returning to my home, carried, in my own heart, the secret which had been swept away and lost, in the waves that went down with the tide, on the Moaning Bar.

THE END.

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
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
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